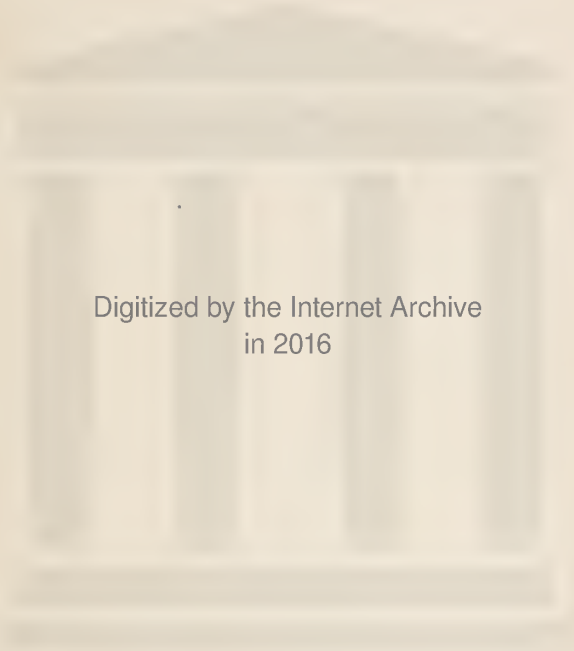
A WHITE UMBRELLA IN MEXICO

F. HOPKINSON SMITH



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A WHITE UMBRELLA IN MEXICO.

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A WHITE UMBRELLA IN MEXICO

BY

F. HOPKINSON SMITH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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I dedicate this book to the most charming of all the señoritas I know; the one whose face lingers longest in my memory while I am away, and whose arms open widest when I return; the most patient of my listeners, the most generous of my critics — my little daughter MARION.

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INTRODUCTION.

My probe has not gone very far below the surface. The task would have been uncongenial and the result superfluous. The record of the resources, religions, politics, governments, social conditions and misfortunes of Mexico already enlarges many folios and lies heavy on many shelves, and I hope on some consciences.

I have preferred rather to present what would appeal to the painter and idler. A land of white sunshine redolent with flowers; a land of gay costumes, crumbling churches, and old convents; a land of

kindly greetings, of extreme courtesy, of open, broad hospitality.

I have delighted my soul with the swaying of the lilies in the sunlight, the rush of the roses crowding over mouldy walls, the broad-leaved palms cooling the shadows, and have wasted none of my precious time searching for the lizard and the mole crawling at their roots.

Content with the novelty and charm of the picturesque life about me, I have watched the naked children at play and the patient peon at work; and the haughty hidalgo, armed and guarded, inspecting his plantation; and the dark-skinned señorita with her lips pressed close to the gratings of the confessional; and even the stealthy, furtive glance of the outlaw, without caring to analyze or solve any one of the many social and religious problems which make these conditions possible.

It was enough for me to find the wild life of the Comanche, the grand estate of the Spanish Don, and the fragments of the past splendor of the ecclesiastical orders existing side by side with the remnant of

that Aztec civilization which fired the Spanish heart in the old days of the Conquest. Enough to discover that in this remnant there still survived a race capable of the highest culture and worthy of the deepest study. A distinct and peculiar people. An unselfish, patient, tender-hearted people, of great personal beauty, courage, and refinement. A people maintaining in their every-day life an etiquette phenomenal in a down-trodden race; offering instantly to the stranger and wayfarer on the very threshold of their adobe huts a hospitality so generous, accompanied by a courtesy so exquisite, that one stops at the next doorway to reënjoy the luxury.

It was more than enough to revel in an Italian sun lighting up a semi-tropical land; to look up to white-capped peaks towering into the blue; to look down upon wind-swept plains encircled by ragged chains of mountains; to catch the sparkle of miniature cities jeweled here and there in oases of olive and orange; and to realize that to-day, in its varied scenery, costumes, architecture, street life, canals

crowded with flower-laden boats, market plazas thronged with gayly dressed natives, faded church interiors, and abandoned convents, Mexico is the most marvellously picturesque country under the sun. A tropical Venice! a semi-barbarous Spain! a new Holy Land.

To study and enjoy this or any other people thoroughly, one must live in the streets. A chat with the old woman selling rosaries near the door of the cathedral, half an hour spent with the sacristan after morning mass, and a word now and then with the donkey-boy, the water-carrier, and the padre, will give you a better idea of a town and a closer insight into its inner life than days spent at the governor's palace or the museum.

If your companion is a white umbrella, and if beneath its shelter you sit for hours painting the picturesque bits that charm your eye, you will have hosts of lookers-on attracted by idle curiosity. Many of these will prove good friends during your stay, and will vie with each other in doing you many little acts of kindness which will linger lovingly in your memory

long after you have shaken the white dust of their villages from your feet.

It is in this spirit and with this intent that I ask you to turn aside from the heat and bustle of your daily life long enough to share with me the cool and quiet of my white umbrella while it is opened in Mexico.

F. H. S.

New York, *December*, 1888.

CHAPTER I.

A MORNING IN GUANAJUATO.

THIS morning I am wandering about Guanajuato. It is a grotesque, quaint old mining town, near the line of the Mexican Central Railroad, within a day's journey of the City of Mexico. I had arrived the night before tired out, and awoke so early that the sun and I appeared on the streets about the same hour.

The air was deliciously cool and fragrant, and shouldering my sketch-trap and umbrella I bent my steps towards the church of *la parróquia.*

I had seen it the night previous as I passed by in the starlight, and its stone pillars and twisted iron railings so de-

lighted me that I spent half the night elaborating its details in my sleep.

The tide of worshippers filling the streets carried prayer-books and rosaries. They were evidently intent on early mass. As for myself I was simply drifting about, watching the people, making notes in my sketch-book, and saturating myself with the charming novelty of my surroundings.

When I reached the small square facing the great green door of the beautiful old church, the golden sunlight was just touching its quaint towers, and the stone urns and crosses surmounting the curious pillars below were still in shadow standing out in dark relief against the blue sky beyond.

I mingled with the crowd, followed into the church, listened a while to the service, and then returned to the plaza and began a circuit of the square that I might select some point of sight from which I could seize the noble pile as a whole, and thus express it within the square of my canvas.

The oftener I walked around it, the more difficult became the problem. A

dozen times I made the circuit, stopping pondering, and stepping backwards and sideways after the manner of painters similarly perplexed; attracting a curious throng, who kept their eyes upon me very much as if they suspected I was either slightly crazed or was about to indulge in some kind of heathen rite entirely new to them.

Finally it became plainly evident that but one point of sight could be relied upon. This centred in the archway of a private house immediately opposite the church. I determined to move in and take possession.

Some care, however, is necessary in the inroads one makes upon a private house in a Spanish city. A watchful porter half concealed in the garden of the patio generally has his eye on the gateway, and overhauls you before you have taken a dozen steps with a "*Hola, señor! á quién busca usted?*" You will also find the lower windows protected by iron *rejas*, through which, if you are on good terms with the black eyes within, you may perhaps kiss the tips of her tapering fingers.

There is a key to the heart of every Spaniard which has seldom failed me — the use of a little politeness. This always engages his attention. Add to it a dash of ceremony and he is your friend at once. If you ask a Cuban for a light, he will first remove his hat, then his cigar, make you a low bow, and holding his fragrant Havana between his thumb and forefinger, with the lighted end towards himself, will present it to you with the air of a grandee that is at once graceful and captivating. If you follow his example and remain bareheaded until the courtesy is complete he will continue bowing until you are out of sight. If you are forgetful, and with thoughts intent upon your own affairs merely thank him and pass on, he will bless himself that he is not as other men are, and dismiss you from his mind as one of those outside barbarians whom it is his duty to forget.

In Mexico the people are still more punctilious. To pass an acquaintance on the street without stopping, hat in hand, and inquiring one by one for his wife, children, and the various members of his

household, and then waiting patiently until he goes through the same family list for you, is an unforgivable offence among friends. Even the native Indians are distinguished by an elaboration of manner in the courtesies they constantly extend to each other noted in no other serving people.

An old woman, barefooted, ragged, and dust begrimed, leaning upon a staff, once preceded me up a narrow, crooked street. She looked like an animated fish-net hung on a fence to dry, so ragged and emaciated was she. A young Indian one half her age crossed her steps as she turned into a side street. Instantly he removed his hat and saluted her as if she had been the Queen of Sheba. "*A los pies de usted, señora*" (At your feet, lady), I heard him say as I passed. "*Bese usted las manos*" (My hands for your kisses, señor), replied she, with a bow which would have become a duchess.

I have lived long enough in Spanish countries to adapt my own habits and regulate my own conduct to the requirements of these customs; and so when

this morning in Guanajuato, I discovered that my only hope lay within the archway of the patio of this noble house, at once the residence of a man of wealth and of rank, I forthwith succumbed to the law of the country, with a result that doubly paid me for all the precious time it took to accomplish it; precious, because the whole front of the beautiful old church with its sloping flight of semicircular stone steps was now bathed in sunlight, and a few hours later the hot sun climbing to the zenith would round the corner of the tower, leave it in shadow, and so spoil its effect.

Within this door sat a fat, oily porter, rolling cigarettes. I approached him, handed him my card, and bade him convey it to his master together with my most distinguished considerations, and inform him that I was a painter from a distant city by the sea, and that I craved permission to erect my easel within the gates of his palace and from this coign of vantage paint the most sacred church across the way.

Before I had half examined the square of the patio with its Moorish columns and

arches and tropical garden filled with flowers, I heard quick footsteps above and caught sight of a group of gentlemen preceded by an elderly man with bristling white hair, walking rapidly along the piazza of the second or living floor of the house.

In a moment more the whole party descended the marble staircase and approached me. The elderly man with the white hair held in his hand my card.

"With the greatest pleasure, señor," he said graciously. "You can use my doorway or any portion of my house; it is all yours; the view from the balcony above is much more extensive. Will you not ascend and see for yourself? But let me present you to my friends and insist that you first come to breakfast."

But I did not need the balcony, and it was impossible for me to share his coffee. The sun was moving, the day half gone, my stay in Guanajuato limited. If he would permit me to sit within the shadow of his gate I would ever bless his generosity, and, the sketch finished, would do myself the honor of appearing before him.

Half a dozen times during the progress of this picture the whole party ran down the staircase, napkins in hand, broke out into rapturous exclamations over its development, and insisted that some sort of nourishment, either solid or fluid, was absolutely necessary for the preservation of my life. Soon the populace began to take an interest, and so blocked up the gateway that I could no longer follow the outlines of the church. I remonstrated, and appealed to my host. He grasped the situation, gave a rapid order to the porter, who disappeared and almost immediately reappeared with an officer who saluted my host with marked respect. Five minutes later a squad of soldiers cleared out the archway and the street in front, formed two files, and mounted guard until my work was over. I began to wonder what manner of man was this who gave away palaces and commanded armies!

At last the sketch was finished, and leaving the porter in charge of my traps I seized the canvas, mounted the winding staircase, and presented myself at the large door opening on the balcony. At

sight of me not only my host, but all his guests, rose to their feet and welcomed me heartily, crowding about the chair against which I propped the picture.

Then a door in the rear of the breakfast-room opened, and the señora and her two pretty daughters glided in for a peep at the work of the morning, declaring in one breath that it was very wonderful that so many colors could be put together in so short a time; that I must be *muy fatigado*, and that they would serve coffee for my refreshment at once.

This to a tramp, remember, discovered

on a doorstep but a few hours before, with designs on the hallway!

This done I must see the garden and the parrots in the swinging cages and the miniature Chihuahua dogs, and last I must ascend the flight of brick steps leading to the roof and see the view from the tip-top of the house. It was when leaning over the projecting iron rail of this lookout, with the city below me and the range of hills above dotted with mining shafts, that I made bold to ask my host a direct question.

"Señor, it is easy for you to see what my life is and how I fill it. Tell me, what manner of man are you?"

"*Con gusto, señor.* I am *un minero.* The shaft you see to the right is the entrance to my silver mine. I am *un agricultor.* Behind yon mountain lies my hacienda, and I am *un bienhechor* (a benefactor). The long white building you see to the left is the hospital which I built and gave to the poor of my town."

When I bade good-by to my miner, benefactor, and friend, I called a sad-faced

Indian boy who had watched me intently while at work, and who waited patiently until I reappeared. To him I consigned my "trap," with the exception of my umbrella staff, which serves me as a cane, and together we lost ourselves in the crowded thoroughfare.

"What is your name, *muchacho?*" I asked.

"Matías, señor."

"And what do you do?"

"Nothing."

"All day?"

"All day and all night, señor."

Here at least was a fellow Bohemian with whom I could loaf to my heart's content. I looked him over carefully. He had large dark eyes with drooping lids, which lent an air of extreme sadness to his handsome face. His curly black hair was crowded under his straw sombrero, with a few stray locks pushed through the crown. His shirt was open at the throat, and his leathern breeches, reaching to his knee, were held above his hips by a rag of a red sash edged with frayed silk fringe. Upon his feet were the sandals

of the country. Whenever he spoke he touched his hat.

"And do you know Guanajuato?" I continued.

"Every stone, señor."

"Show it me."

In the old days this crooked old city of Guanajuato was known as *Quanashuato*, which in the Tarascan tongue means the "Hill of the Frogs;" not from the prevalence of that toothsome morsel, but because the Tarascan Indians, according to Janvier, "found here a huge stone in the shape of a frog, which they worshipped." The city at an elevation of 6,800 feet is crowded into a narrow, deep ravine, terraced on each side to give standing room for its houses. The little Moorish looking town of Marfil stands guard at the entrance of the narrow gorge, its heavy stone houses posted quite into the road, and so blocking it up that the trains of mules must needs dodge their way in and out to reach the railroad below.

As you pass up the ravine you notice that through its channel runs a sluggish, muddy stream, into which is emptied all

the filth of the City of Frogs above, as well as all the pumpings and waste washings of the silver mines which line its sides below.

Into this mire droves of hogs wallow in the hot sun, the mud caking to their sides and backs. This, Matías tells me, their owners religiously wash off once a week to save the silver which it contains. As it is estimated that the summer freshets have scoured from the bed of this brook millions of dollars of silver since the discovery of these mines in 1548, the owners cannot be blamed for scraping these beasts clean, now that their output is reduced to a mere bagatelle of six million dollars annually.

On you climb, looking down upon the houses just passed on the street below, until you round the great building of the Alhóndiga de Granaditas, captured by the patriot priest Hidalgo in 1810, and still holding the iron spike which spitted his head the year following. Then on to the Plaza de Mejía Mora, a charming garden park in the centre of the city.

This was my route, and here I sat down

on a stone bench surrounded by flowers, waving palms, green grass, and pretty señoritas, and listened to the music of a

very creditable band perched in a sort of Chinese pagoda in the park's centre.

Matías was equal to the occasion. At my request he ran to the corner and brought me some oranges, a pot of coffee, and a roll, which I shared with him on the marble slab much to the amusement of the bystanders, who could not understand why I preferred lunching with a

street gamin on a park bench to dining with the *élite* of Guanajuato at the *café* opposite. The solution was easy. We were two tramps with nothing to do.

Next Matías pointed out all the celebrities as they strolled through the plaza — the bishop coming from mass, the governor and his secretary, and the beautiful Señorita Doña María, who had been married the month before with great pomp at the cathedral.

"And what church is that over the way where I see the people kneeling outside, Matías?"

"The Iglesia de San Diego, señor. It is Holy Thursday. To-day no one rides; all the horses are stabled. The señoritas walk to church and wear black veils, and that is why so many are in the streets. To-day and to-morrow the mines are closed and all the miners are out in the sunlight."

While Matías rattled on there swept by me a cloud of lace encircling a bewitching face, from out which snapped two wicked black eyes. The Mexican beauties have more vivacity than their cousins

the Spaniards. It may be that the Indian blood which runs in their veins gives them a piquancy which reminds you more of the sparkle of the French grisette than of the languid air common to almost all high-bred Spanish women.

She, too, twisted her pretty head, and a light laugh bubbled out from between her red lips and perfect teeth, as she caught sight of the unusual spectacle of a foreigner in knickerbockers breakfasting in the open air with a street tramp in sandals.

Seeing me divide an orange with Matías she touched the arm of her companion, an elderly woman carrying a great fan, pointed me out, and then they both laughed immoderately. I arose gravely, and, removing my hat, saluted them with all the deference and respect I could concentrate into one prolonged curve of my spinal column. At this the duenna looked grave and half frightened, but the señorita returned to me only smiles, moved her fan gracefully, and entered the door of the church across the way.

"The caballero will *now* see the

church?" said the boy slowly, as if the incident ended the breakfast.

Later I did, and from behind a pillar where I had hidden myself away from the sacristan who frowned at my sketch-book, and where I could sketch and watch unobserved the penitents on their knees before the altar, I caught sight of my señorita snapping her eyes in the same mischievous way, and talking with her fan, as I have often seen the Spanish women do at the Tacon in Havana. It was not to me this time, but to a devout young fellow kneeling across the aisle. And so she prayed with her lips, and talked with her heart and fan, and when it was all thus silently arranged between them, she bowed to the altar, and glided from the church without one glance at poor me sketching behind the column. When I looked up again her lover had vanished.

Oh! the charm of this semi-tropical Spanish life! The balconies above the patios trellised with flowers; the swinging hammocks; the slow plash of the fountains; the odor of jasmine wet with

dew; the low thrum of guitar and click of castanet; the soft moonlight half-revealing the muffled figures in lace and cloak. It is the same old story, and yet it seems to me it is told in Spanish lands more delightfully and with more romance, color, and mystery than elsewhere on the globe.

Matías woke me from my revery.

"Señor, vespers in the cathedral at four."

So we wandered out into the sunlight, and joined the throng in holiday attire, drifting with the current towards the church of San Francisco. As we entered the side door to avoid the crowd, I stopped to examine a table piled high with rosaries and charms, presided over by a weather-beaten old woman, and covered with what was once an altar cloth of great beauty, embroidered in silver thread and silk. It was just faded and dingy enough to be harmonious, and just ragged enough to be interesting. In the bedecking of the sacred edifice for the festival days then approaching, the old wardrobes of the sacristy had been ransacked, and this

piece coming to light had been thrown over the plain table as a background to the religious knickknacks.

Instantly a dozen schemes to possess it ran through my head. After all sorts of propositions, embracing another cloth, the price of two new ones, and a fresh table thrown in, I was confronted with this proposition: —

"You buy everything upon it, señor, and you can take the table and covering with you."

The service had already commenced. I could smell the burning incense, and hear the tinkling of the altar bell and the burst from the organ. The door by which we entered opened into a long passage running parallel with the church, and connecting with the sacristy which ran immediately behind the altar. The dividing wall between this and the altar side of the church was a thin partition of wood, with grotesque openings near the ceiling. Through these the sounds of the service were so distinct that every word could be understood. These openings proved to be between the backs of certain saints

and carvings, overlaid with gilt and forming the reredos.

Within the sacristy, and within five feet of the bishop who was conducting the service, and entirely undisturbed by our presence, sat four hungry padres at a comfortable luncheon. Each holy father had a bottle of red wine at his plate. Every few minutes a priest would come in from the church side of the partition, the sacristan would remove his vestments, lay them away in the wardrobes, and either robe him anew, or hand him his shovel hat and cane. During the process they all chatted together in the most unconcerned way possible, only lowering their voices when the pauses in the service required it.

It may have been that the spiritual tasks of the day were so prolonged and continuous that there was no time for the material, and that it was either here in the sacristy or go hungry. Or perhaps it lifted for me one corner of the sheet which covers the dead body of the religion of Mexico.

These corners, however, I will not

uncover. The sun shines for us all; the shadows are cool and inviting; the flowers are free and fragrant; the people courteous and hospitable beyond belief; the land the most picturesque and enchanting.

When I look into Matías' sad eyes and think to what a life of poverty and suffering he is doomed, and what his people have endured for ages, these ghosts of revolution, misrule, cruelty, superstition, and want rise up and confront me, and although I know that beneath this charm of atmosphere, color, and courtesy there lurks, like the deadly miasma of the ravine, lulled to sleep by the sunlight, much of degradation, injustice, and crime, still I will probe none of it. So I fill Matías' hand full of silver and copper coins, and his sad eyes full of joyful tears, and as I descend the rocky hill in the evening glow, and look up to the great prison of Guanajuato with its roof fringed with rows of prisoners manacled together, and given this hour of fresh air because of the sacredness of the day, I forget their chains and the intrigue and treachery which

forged many of them, and see only the purple city swimming in the golden light, and the deep shadows of the hills behind it.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER DARK IN SILAO.

"CABALLERO! *A donde va usted?*"

"To Silao, to see the cathedral lighted."

"Alone?"

"*Cierto!* unless you go."

I was half way across the open space dividing the railroad from the city of Silao when I was brought to a stand-still by this inquiry. The questioner was my friend Morgan, an Englishman, who had lived ten years in the country and knew it thoroughly.

He was placed here in charge of the property of the road the day the last spike was driven. A short, thickset, clear blue-eyed, and brown-bearded Briton, whose word was law, and whose brawny arm

enforced it. He had a natural taste for my work and we soon drifted together.

"Better take this," he continued, loosing his belt and handing me its contents — a row of cartridges and a revolver.

"Never carried one in my life."

"Well, you will now."

"Do you mean to say, Morgan, that I cannot cross this flat plain, hardly a quarter of a mile wide, and enter the city in safety without being armed?"

"I mean to say, *mi amigo*, that the mountains around Silao are infested with bandits, outlaws, and thieves; that these fellows prowl at night; that you are a stranger and recognized at sight as an American; that twenty-four hours after your arrival these facts were quietly whispered among the fraternity; that every article of value you have on down to your collar-button is already a subject of discussion and appraisement; that there are nine chances to ten that the blind cripple who sold you dulces this morning at the train was quietly making an inventory of your valuables, and that, had he been recognized by the guard, his legs would

have untwisted themselves in a minute; that after dark in Silao is quite a different thing from under the gaslight in Broadway; and that unless you go armed you cannot go alone."

"But, Morgan, there is not a tree, stone, stump, or building in sight big enough to screen a rat behind. You can see even in the starlight the entrance to the wide street leading to the cathedral."

"Make no mistake, señor, these devils start up out of the ground. Strap this around you or stay here. Can you see my quarters — the small house near the Estacion? Do you notice the portico with the sloping roof? Well, my friend, I have sat on that portico in the cool of the evening and looked across this very plain and heard cries for help, and the next morning at dawn have seen the crowd gathered about a poor devil with a gash in his back the length of your hand."

As we walked through the dust towards the city, Morgan continued: —

"The government are not altogether to blame for this state of things. They have done their best to break it up, and they

have succeeded to a great extent. In Celaya alone the *jefe politico* showed me the records where he had shot one hundred and thirteen bandits in less than two years. He does not waste his time over judge or jury: strings them along in a row within an hour after they are caught plundering, then leaves them two days above ground as a warning to those who get away. Within a year to cross from Silao to Leon without a guard was as much as your life was worth. The diligence was robbed almost daily. This began to be a matter of course and passengers reduced their luggage to the clothes they stood in. Finally the thieves confiscated these. Two years ago, old Don Palacio del Monte, whose hacienda is within five miles of here, started in a diligence one morning at daylight with his wife and two daughters and a young Mexican named Marquando, to attend a wedding feast at a neighboring plantation only a few miles distant. They were the only occupants. An hour after sunrise, while dragging up a steep hill, the coach came to a halt, the driver was pulled

down and bound, old Palacio and Marquando covered with carbines, and every rag of clothing stripped from the entire party. Then they were politely informed by the chief, who was afterwards caught and shot, and who turned out to be the renegade son of the owner of the very hacienda where the wedding festivities were to be celebrated, to go home and inform their friends to bring more baggage in the future or some of them might catch cold!

"Marquando told me of it the week after it occurred. He was still suffering from the mortification. His description of the fat driver crawling up into his seat, and of the courteous old Mexican standing in the sunlight looking like a scourged mediæval saint, and of the dignified wave of his hand as he said to him, 'After you, señor,' before climbing up beside the driver, was delightful. I laughed over it for a week."

"What became of the señora and the girls?" I asked.

"Oh, they slid in through the opposite door of the coach, and remained in seclu-

sion until the driver reached an adobe hut and demanded of a peon family enough clothes to get the party into one of the outbuildings of the hacienda. There they were rescued by their friends."

"And Marquando!" I asked, "did he appear at the wedding?"

"No. That was the hardest part of it. After the ladies were smuggled into the house, Don Palacio, by that time decorated with a straw mat and a sombrero, called Marquando aside. 'Señor,' he said with extreme gravity and deep pathos, 'after the events of the morning it will be impossible for us to recognize each other again. I entertain for you personally the most profound respect. Will you do me the great kindness of never speaking to me or any member of my family after to-day?' Marquando bowed and withdrew. A few months later he was in Leon. The governor gave a ball. As he entered the room he caught sight of Don Palacio surrounded by his wife and daughters. The old Mexican held up his hand, the palm towards Marquando like a barrier. My friend stopped,

bowed to the floor, mounted his horse, and left the city. It cut him deeply too, for he is a fine young fellow and one of the girls liked him."

We had crossed the open space and

were entering the city. Low buildings connected by long white adobe walls, against which grew prickly pears, straggled out into the dusty plateau. Crooning over earthen pots balanced on smouldering embers sat old hags, surrounded by swarthy children watching the preparation of their evening meal. Turning the sharp angle of the street, we stumbled over

a group of peons squatting on the sidewalk, their backs to the wall, muffled to their eyes in their zarapes, some asleep, others motionless, following us with their eyes. Soon the spire of *la parróquia* loomed up in the starlight, its outlines brought out into uncertain relief by the flickering light of the torches blazing in the market-place below. Here Morgan stopped, and pointing to a slit of an alley running between two buildings and widening out into a square court, said : —

"This is the entrance to an old patio long since abandoned. Some years ago a gang of cutthroats used it to hide their plunder. You can see how easy it would be for one of these devils to step behind you, put a stiletto between your shoulder-blades, and bundle you in out of sight."

I crossed over and took the middle of the street. Morgan laughed.

"You are perfectly safe with me," he continued, "for I am known everywhere and would be missed. You might not. Then I adopt the custom of the country and carry an extra cartridge, and they know it. But you would be safe here any

way. It is only the outskirts of these Mexican towns that are dangerous to stroll around in after dark."

There is a law in Mexico called the *ley de fuego* — the law of fire. It is very easily understood. If a convict breaks away from the chain gang he takes his life in his hands. Instantly every carbine in the mounted guard is levelled, and a rattling fire is kept up until he either drops, riddled by balls, or escapes unhurt in the crevices of the foot-hills. Once away he is safe and cannot be rearrested for the same crime. Silao has a number of these birds of freedom, and to their credit be it said, they are eminently respectable citizens. If he is overhauled by a ball the pursuing squad detail a brace of convicts to dig a hole in the softest ground within reach, and a rude wooden cross the next day tells the whole story.

If a brigand has a misunderstanding with a citizen regarding the ownership of certain personal effects, the exclusive property of the citizen, and the brigand in the heat of the debate becomes care-

less in the use of his firearms, the same wooden cross announces the fact with an emphasis that is startling. Occurrences like these have been so frequent in the past that the country around Silao reminds one of an abandoned telegraph system, with nothing standing but the poles and cross-pieces.

Morgan imparted this last information from one of the stone seats in the alameda adjoining the church of Santiago, which we had reached and where we sat quietly smoking, surrounded by throngs of people pushing their way towards the open door of the sacred edifice. We threw away our cigarettes and followed the crowd.

It was the night of Good Friday, and the interior was ablaze with the light of thousands of wax candles suspended from the vaulted roof by fine wires, which swayed with the air from the great doors, while scattered through this sprinkling of stars glistened sheets of gold leaf strung on threads of silk. Ranged along the sides of the church upon a ledge just above the heads of the people sparkled a curious collection of cut-glass bottles, de-

canters, dishes, toilet boxes, and goblets — in fact, every conceivable variety of domestic glass. Behind these in small oil cups floated burned ends of candles and tapers. In the sacristy, upon a rude bier covered by an embroidered sheet, lay the wooden image of the dead Christ, surrounded by crowds of peons and Mexicans passing up to kiss the painted wounds and drop a few centavos for their sins and shortcomings.

As we passed out into the fresh night air, the glare of a torch fell upon an old man seated by a table selling rosaries. Morgan leaned against one of the pillars of the railing surrounding the court, watched the traffic go on for a few minutes, and then pointing to the entrance of the church through which streamed the great flood of light, said : —

" Into that open door goes all the loose money of Mexico."

When we reached the plaza the people still thronged the streets. Venders sold dulces, fruits, candles, and the thousand and one knickknacks bought in holiday times ; torches stuck in the ground on

high poles flared over the alameda; groups of natives smoking cigarettes chatted gayly near the fountain; while lovers in pairs disported themselves after the manner of their kind under the trees. One young Indian girl and her dusky caballero greatly interested me. Nothing seemed to disturb them. They cooed away in the full glare of a street lantern as unconscious and unconcerned as if a roof sheltered them. He had spread his blanket so as to protect her from the cold stone bench. It was not a very wide zarape, and yet there was room enough for two.

The poverty of the pair was unmistakable. A straw sombrero, cotton shirt, trousers, and sandals completed his outfit, a chemise, blue skirt, scarlet sash, and rebozo twisted about her throat her own. This humble raiment was clean and fresh, and the red rose tucked coquettishly among the braids of her purple-black hair was just what was wanted to make it picturesque.

Both were smoking the same cigarette and laughing between each puff, he pro-

testing that she should have two whiffs to his one, at which there would be a little kittenish spatting, ending in his having his own way and kissing her two cheeks for punishment.

With us, some love affairs end in smoke; here they seem to thrive upon it.

Morgan, however, did not seem to appreciate the love-making. He was impatient to return to the station, for it was nearly midnight.

"If you are going to supervise all the love affairs in Silao you might as well make a night of it," he laughed. So we turned from the plaza, entered a broad street, and followed along a high wall surrounding a large house, in reality the palace of Manuel Gonzalez, formerly President of the Republic. Here the crowds in the street began to thin out. By the time we reached another turn the city was deserted. Morgan struck a wax taper and consulted his watch.

"In ten minutes, *mi amigo*, the train is due from Chihuahua. I must be on hand to unlock the freight-house. We will make a short cut through here."

The moon had set, leaving to the flickering lanterns at the street corners the task of lighting us home. I stumbled along, keeping close to my friend, winding in and out of lonely crooked streets, under black archways, and around the sharp projecting angles of low adobe walls. The only sound beside our hurrying footsteps was the loud crowing of a cock miscalculating the dawn.

Suddenly Morgan pushed aside a swinging wooden door framed in an adobe wall, and I followed him through what appeared to be an abandoned convent garden. He halted on the opposite side of the quadrangle, felt along the whitewashed wall, shot back a bolt, and held open a second door. As I closed it behind me a man wrapped in a cloak stepped from a niche in the wall and leveled his carbine. Morgan sprang back and called out to me in a sharp firm voice: —

"Stand still."

I glued myself to the spot. In fact, the only part of me that was at all alive was my imagination.

I was instantly perforated, stripped, and

lugged off to the mountains on a burro's back, where select portions of my ears were sliced off and forwarded to my friends as sight drafts on my entire worldly estate. While I was calculating the chances of my plunging through the door and escaping by the garden, this came from the muffled figure: —

"*Quien vive?*"

"*La libertad,*" replied Morgan quietly.

"*Que nacion?*"

"*Un compatriota,*" answered my companion.

The carbine was lowered slowly. Morgan advanced, mumbled a few words, called to me to follow, and struck out boldly across the plain to the station.

"Who was your murderous friend? a brigand?" I asked when I had recovered my breath.

"No. One of the Rurales, or civil guards. They are the salvation of the country. They challenge every man crossing their beat after ten o'clock."

"And if you do not halt? Then what?"

"Then say a short prayer. There will not be time for a long one."

As we reached the tracks I heard the whistle of the night express. Morgan seized a lantern and swung it above his head. The train stopped. I counted all my bones and turned in for the night.

CHAPTER III.

THE OPALS OF QUERÉTARO.

I ARRIVED with a cyclone. To be exact, the cyclone was ahead. All I saw as I stepped from the train was a whirling cloud of dust through which the roof of the station was dimly outlined, a long plank walk, and a string of cabs.

A boy emerged from the cloud and grabbed my bag.

"Will it rain?" I asked anxiously.

"No, señor. No rain, but much dust."

It was a dry storm, common in this season and section. Compared with it the simoon on the Sahara is a gentle zephyr.

When the boy had collected the balance of my belongings, he promptly asked me two questions. Would I visit the spot where Maximilian was shot, and would I buy some opals. The first was to be accomplished by means of a cab; the second by diving into his trousers pocket and hauling up a little wad. This he unrolled, displaying half a teaspoonful of gems of more or less value and brilliancy.

I had not the slightest desire to see the spot, and my bank account was entirely too limited for opalescent luxuries. I imparted this information, rubbing both eyes and breathing through my sleeve. He could get me a cab and a hotel — anywhere out of this simoon.

"But, señor, it will be over in a minute."

Even while he spoke the sun sifted through, the blue sky appeared faintly overhead, and little whirls of funnel-shaped dust went careering down the track to plague the next town below.

When I reached the plaza the air was delicious and balmy, and the fountains under the trees cool and refreshing.

If one has absolutely nothing to do, Querétaro is the place in which to do it. If he suffers from the constitutional disease of being born tired, here is the place for him to rest. The grass grows in the middle of the streets; at every corner there is a small open square full of trees; under each tree a bench; on every bench a wayfarer: they are all resting. If you interview one of them as to his special occupation, he will revive long enough to search among the recesses of his wardrobe and fish out various little wads. When he unwinds the skein of dirty thread which binds one, he will spill out upon his equally dirty palm a thimbleful of the national gems, of more or less value.

You wonder where all these opalescent seed pearls come from, and conclude that each one of these weary dealers has an especial hole in the ground somewhere which he visits at night. Hence his wads, his weariness, and his daytime loaf.

In reply to your inquiries he says, in a vague sort of a way, Oh! from the mines; but whether they are across the moun-

tains or in his back-yard you never know. Of one thing you are convinced: to be retailed by the wad, these gems must be wholesaled by the bushel. You can hardly jostle a man in Querétaro who has not a collection somewhere about him. The flower-woman at the corner, the water-carrier with his red jars, the cabby, the express agent, the policeman, and I doubt not the padre and the sacristan, all have their little wads tucked away somewhere in their little pockets.

And yet with all this no one ever saw, within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, a single stone in the ear or on the finger of any citizen of Querétaro. They are hoarded for the especial benefit of the stranger. If he is a poor stranger and has but one peseta it makes no difference, he must have an opal, and the spoonful is raked over until a little one for a peseta is found. Quite an electric light of a gem can be purchased for five dollars.

The spot and the opal are, however, the only drawbacks to the stranger, and even then if it becomes known that upon

no possible condition could you be induced to climb that forlorn hill, half way up which the poor emperor was riddled to death, and that you have been born not only tired but with the superstition that opals are unlucky, then by a kind of freemasonry the word is passed around, and you are spared, and welcomed. This was my experience. The well-known poverty of the painter the world over — instantly recognized when I opened my umbrella — assisted me, no doubt, in establishing this relation.

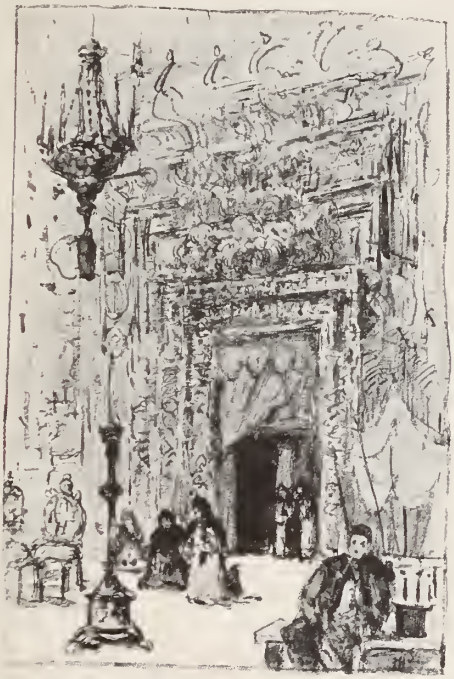
But the charm of Querétaro is not confined to its grass-grown streets. The churches are especially interesting. That of Santa Cruz is entirely unique, particularly its interior adornment. Besides, there is a great aqueduct, five miles long, built on stone arches, — the most important work of its kind in Mexico, — supplying fresh cool water from the mountains, the greatest of all blessings in a thirsty land. Then there are scores of fountains scattered through the city, semi-tropical plants in the plazas, palms and bananas over the walks, and on the edge

of the city a delightful alameda, filled with trees and embowered in roses. The flowers are free to whoever will gather. Moreover, on the corners of the streets, under the arching palms, sit Indian women selling water from great red earthen jars.

With that delicate, refined taste which characterizes these people in everything they touch, the rims of these jars are wreathed with poppies, while over their sides hang festoons of leaves. The whole has a refreshing look which must be enjoyed to be appreciated. I put down half a centavo, the smallest of copper coins, and up came a glass of almost ice-cold water from the jars of soft-baked porous clay.

Then there is the church of Santa Clara, a smoky, dingy old church, with sunken floors and a generally dilapidated appearance within — until you begin to analyze its details. Imagine a door leading from the main body of the church — it is not large — to the sacristy. The door proper is the inside beading of an old picture frame. Across the top is a

heavy silk curtain of faded pomegranate.



Around the beading extend the several members of a larger and still larger frame,

in grooves, flutes, scrolls, and rich elaborate carving clear to the ceiling, the whole forming one enormous frame of solid gilt. In and out of this yellow gold door little black dots of priests and penitents sway the pomegranate curtain looped back to let them pass. To the right rises a high choir loft overlaid with gold leaf. Scattered about on the walls, unplaced, as it were, hang old pictures and tattered banners. On the left stands the altar, raised above the level of the church, surrounded by threadbare velvet chairs, and high candelabra resting on the floor, holding giant candles. Above these hang dingy old lamps of exquisite design. The light struggles through the windows, begrimed with dust. The uncertain benches are polished smooth. At the far end a sort of partition of open wooden slats shuts off the altar rail. Behind this screen is stored a lumber of old furniture, great chests, wooden images, and the abandoned and wornout paraphernalia of religious festivals.

Yet with all this Santa Clara is the most delightfully picturesque church in-

terior one can meet with the world over. Some day they will take up a collection, or an old Don will die and leave a pot of money "to restore and beautify the most holy and sacred the church of Santa Clara," and the fiends will enter in and close the church, and pull down the old pictures and throw away the lamps, chairs and candlesticks, and whitewash the walls, regild the huge frame of the sacristy door, and make dust rags of the pomegranate silk. Then they will hang a green and purple raw silk terror, bordered with silver braid, in its place, panel the whitewashed walls in red stripes, bracket pressed-glass kerosene lamps on the columns, open the edifice to the public, and sing Te Deums for a month, in honor of the donor.

This is not an exaggeration. Step into the church of San Francisco, now the cathedral of Querétaro, within half a dozen squares of this lovely old church of Santa Clara, and see the ruin that has been wrought. I forget the name of the distinguished old devotee who contributed his estate to destroy this once beautiful

interior, but his soul ought to do penance in purgatory until the fingers of time shall have regilded it with the soft bloom of the dust and mould of centuries, and the light of countless summers shall have faded into pale harmonies the impious contrasts he left behind him.

I often think what a shock it must be to the good taste of nature when one whitewashes an old fence. For years the sun bleached it, and the winds polished it until each fibre shone like soft threads of gray satin. Then the little lichens went to work and filled up all the cracks and crannies, and wove gray and black films of lace over the rails, and the dew came every night and helped the green moss to bind the edges with velvet, and the worms gnawed the splinters into holes, and the weeds clustered about it and threw their tall blossoms against it, and where there was found the top of a particularly ugly old hewn post a little creeper of a vine peeped over the stone wall and saw its chance and called out, "Hold on; I can hide that," and so shot out a long, delicate spray of green, which clung faithfully all

summer and left a crown of gold behind when it died in the autumn. And yet here comes this vandal with a scythe and a bucket, sweeps away all this beauty in an hour, and leaves behind only its grinning skeleton.

A man who could whitewash an old worm fence would be guilty of any crime, — even of boiling a peach.

But with the exception of the cathedral, this imp of a bucket has fastened very little of his fatal work upon Querétaro.

When the sun goes down behind the trees of the plaza the closely barred shutters, closed all day, are bowed open, and between the slats you can catch the flash of a pair of dark eyes. Later, the fair owners come out on the balconies one by one, their dark hair so elaborately wrought that you know at a glance how the greater part of the afternoon has been spent. When the twilight steals on, the doors of these lonely and apparently uninhabited houses are thrown wide open, displaying the exquisite gardens blooming in the patios, and through the gratings of the always closed iron gates you get glimpses

of easy chairs and hammocks with indented pillows, telling the story of the day's exertion. In the twilight you pass

these same pretty señoritas in groups of threes and fours strolling through the parks, dressed in pink and white lawn with Spanish veils and fans, their dainty feet clad in white stockings and red-heeled slippers.

One makes friends easily among a people so isolated. When it is once understood that although an American you are not connected with the railway, their hospitality is most cordial.

"I like you," said an old man seated next me on a bench in the plaza one afternoon, "because you are an American and do not eat the tobacco. *Caramba!* that is horrible!"

My trap, moreover, is a constant source of astonishment and amusement. No sooner is the umbrella raised and I get fairly to work than I am surrounded by a crowd so dense I cannot see a rod ahead. It is so rare that a painter is seen in the streets — many people tell me that they never saw one at work before — that often I rise from my stool in despair at the backs and shoulders in front. I then pick out some one or two having authority

and stand them guard over each wing of the half circle, and so the sketch is completed.

This old fellow who shared my bench in the plaza had served me in this capacity in the morning, and our acquaintance soon ripened into an intimacy. He was a clean, cool, breezy-looking old fellow, with a wide straw sombrero shading a ruddy face framed in a bushy snow-white beard. His coat, trousers, shirt, and sandals were all apparently cut from the same piece of white cotton cloth. The only bit of color about him below his rosy face was a zarape. This, from successive washings, — an unusual treatment, by the way, for zarapes, — had faded to a delicate pink.

"Not made now," said he, in answer to my inquiring glance. "This zarape belonged to my father, and was woven by my grandmother on a hand loom. You can get plenty at the store. They are made by steam, but I cannot part with this. It is for my son."

I reluctantly gave it up. It was the best I had seen. When he stood up and

wrapped it about him he was as delicious a bit of color as one would find in a day's journey. Moreover, the old fellow was a man of information. He knew the history of the founding of the city and the building of the great aqueduct by the Marques de la Villa del Villar de la Aguila, who defrayed most of the expenses, and whose effigy decorates the principal fountain. He saw Maximilian and Generals Miramon and Mejía leave the convent of Santa Cruz the morning of their execution, June 19, 1867 ; and remembered perfectly the war with the United States and the day the treaty of peace was ratified with Congress in 1848. Finally he tells me that pulque was first discovered in Querétaro, and insists that, as this is my last day in the city, — for on the morrow I go to Aguas Calientes, — I must go to the posada opposite and have a mug with him ; that when I reach the great City of Mexico I will think of this pulque, the most delicious in the republic, and finding none to compare, will come back to Querétaro for its mate and so he will see me again.

We have the pulque, the old man drinking my share, and on our way to the station pass through the market-place. My last view of this delightful old city is across this market-place, with the domed buildings in the background silhouetted against the evening sky. All over the open space where the rush and traffic of the morning had held sway now lounged and slept hundreds of tired people, some on the steps surrounding the square stone column centring the plaza, others flat on the pavement. Here they will doze until the sun looks at them from over the *Cerro de las Campañas.* Then they will shake themselves together, and each one will go in search of his daily avocation. It is safe to say that not one in ten ever finds it.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME PEONS AT AGUAS CALIENTES.

Blinding sunlight; a broad road ankle deep in dust; a double row of great trees with branches like twisted cobras; inky blue black shadows stencilled on the gray dust, repeating the tree forms above; a long, narrow canal but a few feet wide half filled with water, from which rise little whiffs of hot steam; beside it a straggling rude stone wall fringed with bushes. In the middle distance, through vistas of tree trunks, glimpses of brown fields fading away into pale pink, violet, and green. In the dim blue beyond, the dome and towers of a church, surmounting little spots of yellow, cream white, and red,

broken with patches of dark green, — locating bits of the town, — with orange groves between.

Long strings of burros crawl into the city along this highway loaded down with great bundles of green fodder; undulating masses of yellow dust drift over it, which harden into droves of sheep as they pass.

Shuffling along its edges, hugging the intermittent shadows, stroll groups of natives in twos and threes; the women in straw hats with plaited hair, their little children slung to their backs, the men in zarapes and sandals carrying crates on their shoulders packed with live poultry and cheap pottery.

Such was my first glance at Aguas Calientes. But there is something more. To the left, along the whole length of the canal or sluiceway, as far as the eye can reach, are scattered hundreds of natives of both sexes, and all ages, lining the water's edge and disporting themselves in every conceivable state of *déshabille*. In fact, it might as well be stated that the assemblage is divided into two classes, those who have something on and those

who have nothing. Five hundred of the descendants of Montezuma quietly taking their baths at high noon on a public highway, with only such privacy as the Republic of Mexico and the blue sky of heaven afford!

Old men hobble along the roadside, turn off to the left, select a convenient bush as a clothes-rack, scale off what scanty raiment they carry with them, and slide turtle-like into the warm water. Young Indian girls in bunches of half a dozen sit by the canal and comb out their wavy black hair, glossy with wet, while they chat merrily with their friends whose heads bob up over the brink, and whose bodies simmer at a temperature of 90°. Whole families soak in groups, sousing their babies in the warm water and draining them on the bank, where they glisten in the dazzling sunlight like bronzed cupids. Now and then a tall, straight young Indian turns aside from out the dust, winds his zarape about him, and protected by its folds unmakes his toilet, and disappears over the edge.

Up and down this curious inland Long

Branch rows of heads bob up from the sluiceway and smile good-naturedly as I draw near. They are not abashed or disturbed in the slightest degree; they are only concerned lest I seek to crowd them from their places; theirs by right of occupancy.

Even the young women lying on the bank in the shade, with one end of a zarape tossed over their backs, their only other garment washed and drying in the sun, seem more interested in the sketch trap than in him who carries it. It is one of the customs of the country.

It is true that near the springs above, within a mile of this spot, there is a small pond filled from the overflow of the baths adjoining, which they can use and sometimes do, but the privacy is none the greater. It is equally true that down the road nearer the city there are also the "*Baños Grandes*," where for one peseta — about twenty-five cents — they can obtain a bath with all the encircling privacy of stone walls, and with the additional comforts of a crash towel, one foot square, and a cake of soap of the size and density

of a grapeshot. But then, the wages of a native for a whole day's work is less than one peseta, and when he is lucky enough to get this, every centavo in it is needed for the inside of his dust-covered body.

Nor can he utilize his surplus clothing as a shield and cover. He has but one suit, a white shirt and a pair of cotton trousers. Naturally he falls back upon his zarape, often handling it as skilfully and effectively as the Indian women on the steps leading to the sacred Ganges do their gorgeous colored tunics, slipping the dry one over the wet without much more than a glimpse of finger and toe.

All these thoughts ran through my head as I unlimbered my trap, opened my white umbrella, and put up my easel to paint the curious scene.

"*Buenos dias, señor,*" came a voice over my shoulder. I looked up and into the dark eyes of a swarthy Mexican, who was regarding me with much the same air as one would a street peddler preparing to exhibit his wares.

"Does everybody hereabout bathe in the open air?" I ventured to ask.

"Why not? It is either here or not at all," he replied.

I continued at work, ruminating over the strange surroundings, the query unanswered.

Why not, in fact? A tropical sun, clouds of dust dry as powder and fine as smoke, air and water free, nothing else in their life of slavery.

One has only to look into these sad faces to read the history of this patient, uncomplaining race, or to watch them as they sit for hours in the shadow of some great building, motionless, muffled to the mouth in their zarapes and rebozos, their eyes looking straight ahead as if determined to read the future, — to appreciate their hopelessness.

From the days of Cortez down to the time of Diaz, they have been humiliated, degraded, and enslaved; all their patriotism, self-reliance, and independence has long since been crushed out. They are a serving people; set apart and kept apart by a *caste* as defined and rigid as divides society to-day in Hindoostan — infinitely more severe than ever existed in the most

benighted section of our own country in the old plantation days.

They have inherited nothing in the past but poverty and suffering, and ex-

pect nothing in the future. To sleep, to awake, to be hungry, to sleep again. Sheltered by adobe huts, sleeping upon coarse straw mats, their only utensils the rude earthen vessels they make themselves, their daily food but bruised corn pounded in a stone mortar, they pass their lives awaiting the inevitable, without hope and without ambition.

"As a rule," says Consul-General Strother (Porte Crayon) "none of the working classes of Mexico have any idea of pres-

ent economy or of providing for the future. The lives of most of them seem to be occupied in obtaining food and amusement for the passing hour, without either hope or desire for a better future."

David A. Wells, in his terse and pithy "Study of Mexico," speaking of the haciendas and their peon labor, says: —

"The owners of these large Mexican estates, who are generally men of wealth and education, rarely live upon them, but make their homes in the city of Mexico or in Europe, and intrust the management of their property to a superintendent who, like the owner, considers himself a gentleman, and whose chief business is to keep the peons in debt, or, what is the same thing, in slavery. Whatever work is done is performed by the peons, — in whose veins Indian blood predominates, — in their own way and in their own time. . . . Without being bred to any mechanical profession, the peons make and repair nearly every instrument or tool that is used upon the estate, and this, too, without the use of a forge, not even of bolts and nails. The explanation of such

an apparently marvellous result is to be found in a single word or rather material, — rawhide, — with which the peon feels himself qualified to meet almost any constructive emergency, from the framing of a house to the making of a loom, the mending of a gun, or the repair of a broken leg."

It is not, therefore, from lack of intelligence, or ingenuity, or capacity, that the condition of these descendants of the Aztec warriors is so hopeless, but rather from the social isolation to which they are subjected, and which cuts them off from every influence that makes the white man their superior.

So I worked on, pondering over this hopeless race, outcasts and serfs in a land once their own, and thinking of the long account of cruelty and selfishness which stood against the Spanish nation, when suddenly from beneath my white umbrella I noticed three Indians rise from the ground near the canal, stand apart from their fellows, and walk towards me. As I lifted my eyes they hesitated, then, as if gathering courage, again advanced cautiously until they stood within a dozen

yards of my easel. Here they squatted in the dust, the three in a row, their zarapes half covering their faces. I laid down my palette and beckoned them to me. They advanced smiling, raised their sombreros with an "*a Dios, señor*," crouched down on their haunches, a favorite attitude, and watched every movement of my brush with the deepest interest, exchanging significant and appreciative glances as I dotted in the figures. Not one opened his lips. Silent and grave as the stone gods of their ancestors sat they, wholly absorbed in a revelation as astounding to them as a vision from an unknown world.

Presently a great flock of sheep wrinkled past me shutting out my view, and I reversed my canvas to shield it, and waited for the dust to settle. During the pause I slipped my hand in the side pocket of my blouse, drew out my cigarette case, and, touching the spring, handed its open contents to the three Indians.

It was curious to see how they received the slight courtesy, and with what surprise, hesitancy, and genuine delight they looked at the open case. It was as if you had

stopped a crippled beggar on the road and, having relieved his wants, had lifted him up beside you and returned him to his hovel in your carriage.

Each man helped himself daintily to my cigarettes, laying them on the palm of his hand, and then watched me closely. I selected my own, touched my match-safe, and passed the lighted taper to the Indian nearest me. Instantly they all uncovered, placing their sombreros in the dust, and gravely accepted the light. When I had exhausted its flickering flame upon my own cigarette, and taken my first whiff, they replaced their hats with the same sort of respectful silence one sometimes sees in a crowded street when a priestly procession passes. It was not a matter of form alone. It did not seem to be simply the acknowledgment of perhaps the most trivial courtesy one can offer another in a Spanish country. There was something more that lurked around the corners of their mouths and kindled in their eyes, which said to me but too plainly : —

"This stranger is a white man and yet he does not despise us."

When the sketch was finished, the trap packed, and I turned to retrace my steps to my lodgings, all three arose to their feet, unwound their zarapes, and trailed them in the dust. I can see them now, standing uncovered in the sunlight, and hear their low, soft voices calling after me: —

"*Con Dios va usted, mi amigo.*"

I continued my rambles, following the highway into the city, idling about the streets and jotting down queer bits of architecture and odd figures in my sketch-book. I stopped long enough to examine the high saddles of a pair of horses tethered outside a *fonda*, their owners drinking pulque within, and then crossed over to where some children were playing "bull fight."

When the sun went down I strolled into the beautiful garden of San Marcos and sat me down on one of the stone benches surrounding the fountain. Here, after bathing my face and hands in the cool water of the basin, I rested and talked to the gardener.

He was an Indian, quite an old man, and had spent most of his life here. The garden belonged to the city, and he was paid two pesetas a day to take care of his part of it. If I would come in the evening the benches would be full. There were many beautiful señoritas in Aguas Calientes, and on Sunday there would be music. But I must wait until April if I wanted to see the garden, and in fact the whole city, in its gala dress. Then would be celebrated the *fiesta* of San Marcos, their patron saint, strings of lanterns hung and lighted, the fountains playing music everywhere, and crowds of people from all the country around, even from the great city of Mexico, and as far north as Zacatécas. Then he tucked a cluster of azaleas into the strap of my "trap" and insisted on going with me to the corner of the cathedral, so that I should not miss the turn in the next street that led to the pottery market.

All the markets of Aguas Calientes are interesting, for the country round about is singularly rich and fertile, and fruits and vegetables are raised in abundance.

The pottery market is especially so. It is held in a small open square near the general market, surrounded by high buildings. The pottery is piled in great heaps on the ground, and the Indian women, sheltered by huge square and octagon umbrellas of coarse matting, sit all day serving their customers. At night they burn torches. All the other markets are closed at noon. The pottery is very cheap, a few centavos covering the cost of almost any single piece of moderate size, and one peseta making you master of the most important specimen in a collection.

Each province, in fact almost every village in Mexico, produces a ware having more or less distinctly marked characteristics. In Guadalajara the pottery is gray, soft-baked, and unglazed, but highly polished and often decorated with strippings of silver and gold bronze. In Zacatécas the glaze is as hard and brilliant as a piano top, and the small pulque pots and pitchers look like polished mahogany or highly-colored meerschaum pipe bowls. In Puebla a finer ware is made, something between good earthenware and

coarse, soft porcelain. It has a thick tin glaze, and the decoration in strong color is an under-glaze. Here in Aguas Calientes they make not only most of these coarser varieties, but a better grade of gray stoneware, covered with a yellow glaze, semi-transparent, with splashings of red flowers and leaves scattered over it.

The potters are these much despised, degraded peons, who not only work in clay, embroider in feathers with exquisite results (an industry of their ancestors), but make the finer saddles of stamped and incised leather, besides producing an infinite variety of horse equipment unknown outside of Mexico. Moreover, in Uruápam they make Japanese lacquers, in Santa Fé on Lake Pátzcuaro, Moorish iridescent ware, and near Puebla, Venetian glass. In a small town in western Mexico I found a glass pitcher, made by a Tarascan Indian, of such exquisite mould and finish that one unfamiliar with the handiwork of this down-trodden race, seeing it in its place of honor in my studio, would say, "Ah, Venetian — Salviati, of course."

From the market I sought the church of San Diego, with its inlaid wooden floor, and quaint doorway richly carved, and as the twilight settled, entered the narrow street that led to my lodgings. At the farther end, beneath an overhanging balcony, a group of children and natives were gathered about a band of wandering minstrels. As I drew near, the tinkle of a triangle and the thrum of a harp accompanying a weird chant rose on the air. The quartette in appearance, costume, and bearing were quite different from any of the Indians I had seen about Aguas Calientes. They were much lighter in color, and were distinguished by a certain air of independence and dignity.

The tallest and oldest of the band held in his left hand a short harp, quite Greek in its design. The youngest shook a tambourine, with rim and rattles complete, but without the drumhead. The third tinkled a triangle, while the fourth, a delicate-looking, large-eyed, straight young fellow, handsome as a Greek god, with teeth like rows of corn, joined in the rhythmic chant. As they stood in the

darkening shadows beating time with their sandalled feet, with harp and triangle silhouetted against the evening sky, and zarapes hanging in long straight lines from their shoulders, the effect was so thoroughly classic that I could not but recall one of the great friezes of the Parthenon. I lighted a cigarette, opened the window of my balcony, and placing the bits of pottery I had bought in the market in a row on my window-sill, with the old gardener's azaleas in the largest jar, listened to the music, my thoughts full of the day's work and experience. My memory went back to my three friends of the morning, standing in the sunlight, their sombreros in the dust; to the garrulous old gardener bending over his flowers; to the girl selling pottery; to the almost tender courtesy and gentleness of these people, their un-

changing serenity of temper, their marvellous patience, their innate taste and skill, their hopeless poverty and daily privations and sufferings; and finally to the injustice of it all.

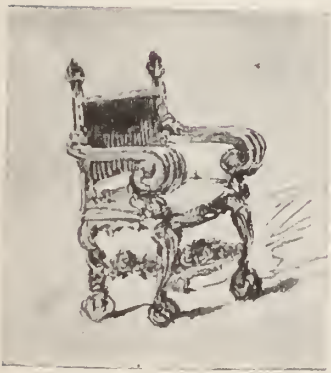
Peons and serfs in their own land! Despoiled by Cortez, tricked by his successors, enslaved by the viceroys, taxed, beaten, defrauded, and despised by almost every ruler and usurper since the days of Spanish rule, the whole history of the life of the Aztec and his descendants, from the initial massacre at Cholula down to the present day, has been one long list of cruelty and deceit.

The music ceased. The old minstrel approached the balcony and held up his wide sombrero. I poured into it all my stock of copper coin. "*Muchas gracias, señor,*" came back the humble acknowledgment. Then they disappeared up the narrow street and the crowd dispersed. I looked after them long and musingly, and surprised myself repeating the benediction of the morning, —

"*Con Dios vayan ustedes, mis amigos.*"

CHAPTER V.

THE OLD CHAIR IN THE SACRISTY AT ZACATÉCAS.



It stood just inside the door as I entered from the main body of the church. Richly carved, with great arms broadened out where the elbows touched, it had the air of being especially designed for some overfed, lazy prelate. The hand rests were rounded in wide flutes, convenient spaces for his fat fingers. The legs bowed out slightly from the seat, then curved sharply, and finally terminated in four grotesque claws, each clutching a great round ball, — here his

toes rested. The back and seat were covered with the rags and remnants of a once rich velvet, fastened by an intermittent row of brass nails, some headless, and others showing only the indent of their former usefulness. On each corner of the back flared two gilt flambeaux, standing bolt upright like a pair of outspread hands. Over the whole was sifted, and into each crack, split, and carving was grimed and channelled the white dust that envelops Zacatécas like an atmosphere.

The old chair had evidently had its day, and it had been a glorious one. What ceremonies! What processions, masses, feasts, had it presided over! What grave counsels had it listened to! What dangers escaped, the last but a score of years ago when this same old cathedral of Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion was bombarded by Juarez!

Its curved and stately lines were too graceful for Mexican handiwork. Perhaps some old Spanish grandee, with penitence in his soul, had sent this noble seat across the sea to the new Spain, in grateful remembrance of the most holy and

blessed Lady of Guadaloupe, the patron saint of this once powerful church.

If, in the old days, it had belonged to a set of twelve, or, by reason of its arms, had presided over a family less blessed, no fragment of back, leg, or round was left to tell the tale. A plain square table, covered with a cotton cloth edged with cheap lace, upon which stood a crucifix, a few worn-out, high-backed, hide-bottomed chairs, and a chest of green painted bureau drawers built into the wall and holding the church vestments, were its only companions. But all these were of a recent date and pattern.

I had been in Zacatécas but a few hours when I discovered this precious relic of the last century. I coveted it at sight; more, I admit, than I dared tell the good-natured, patient sacristan who stood by wondering and delighted, watching me make a rapid sketch of its twisted legs and capacious seat. To all my propositions for its immediate possession, however, he only shrugged his shoulders. I confess that many of them savored of conspiracy, and all of them of

grand larceny, and that I was entitled to a speedy trial and a place in the chain-gang for suggesting any one of them.

"A ragged old chair that will hardly stand upright; the only one left. Who will miss it?" I argued.

"The padre, señor painter, who is very old. He loves everything here. This wretched chair has been his friend for many years."

"Tell him, *mi amigo*, that I, too, love chairs, old ones especially, and will give him the price of two, four, six new ones, for this old rattletrap."

"Very well, señor; at five o'clock to-day vespers will be over. Then the padre will return here. Wait for me in the garden over the way near the fountain."

The decision was a relief. In Mexico, as in Spain, it is generally to-morrow or the day after. *Mañana por la mañana* is the motto of the Spanish-speaking race.

It was now twelve o'clock. Only five hours to wait. My hopes rose. I reëntered the cathedral.

It had been a sumptuous church in its day. Begun in 1612, completed one hun-

dred and twenty-five years later, and dedicated with imposing ceremonies the year following, it had contained within its walls all that florid magnificence which distinguishes the Mexican churches. All the interior adornments had been of plated gilt, the altars of fine marble and onyx, the font of solid silver, — alone valued at twenty thousand pounds sterling. Four noble steps of colored marble, still intact, led the way to the altar. On each side ran a railing of wrought silver of fabulous worth. Over this had hung a lamp of splendid proportions, burning a single taper, and shedding a ruby light. The main floor was of marquetry of varied colored woods, and of a simple Moorish pattern, marking the prominence of that Spanish taste which at the period charac-

terized so many of the great colonial structures.

But sad changes had taken place since that date, most of them within the last quarter of this century. Not only had the superb silver altar-rail, hanging lamp, and costly font been coined down into Mexican dollars, but tapestries and velvets, chasubles and copes, heavy with embroidery in gold and silver, had also found their way to the crucible. Even the intricate marquetry floor had been broken up, presumably in the search for hidden vessels, and in its place here and there were great squares of heavy planking held down by rude iron spikes, the heads thrust up and kept bright by the restless feet of countless worshippers.

The leaders of an impecunious government executing a forced loan do not stop at trifles like these!

As I wandered about, comparing its present shabby surroundings with the record of its past grandeur, groups of penitents would glide in, throw their rebozos from their faces, and kneel praying. Near me a single figure closely muffled would

press her face against the sliding panel of the queer confessional box and pour into the ear of the listless priest the story of her sin. Over by the altar a solitary Indian, wrapped in his zarape, his wide straw sombrero by his side, would bend forward until his forehead touched the cold pavement and so remain motionless. About in the aisles or prostrate before the rude wooden figures of the saints knelt other groups of worshippers, often an entire family together, telling their beads with their lips and watching me with their eyes as I noted in my sketch-book the picturesque bits about me. Finally I completed the circuit of the interior, and a flood of sunlight poured in through an open door. This led me to the street and so on into the market-place.

No such scene exists in any quarter of the globe where I have wandered: a brilliant sky blue as a china plate; blinding sunlight; throngs of people in red, orange, or blue; women in rebozos and scarlet sashes; men wearing vermillion zarapes about their shoulders, with wide hats of felt trimmed with silver, and

breeches of pink buckskin held together down the sides by silver buttons; donkeys piled high with great sacks of silver ore; cavaliers on horseback with murderous rowels in the heels of their riding-boots, their Mexican saddles festooned with lassos and lariats; soldiers carrying carbines and mounted on spirited horses guarding gangs of convicts, each one of whom staggers under a basket of sand held to his back by a strap across his forehead; great flocks of sheep blocking up the narrow streets, driven by shepherds on horseback, changing their pasture from one hillside to another; the whole completes a picture as strange as it is unique.

In the centre of the plaza stands a curious fountain, surrounded by a low wall breast-high. Around this swarm hundreds of women. Hanging over it are half a hundred more, reaching as far across the circular wall as their arms will permit, scooping up the thin sheet of water into saucers with which they filled their jars. On the pavement, protected by huge square umbrellas of straw

mats, with ribs like a boy's kite, squatting Indian women sell oranges, prickly pears, figs, lemons, *cherimoyis*, great melons, and other tropical fruits. On the

corners of the streets, under rags of awning, sit cobblers ready to cut and fit a sandal while you wait, their whole stock in trade but a pile of scraps of sole leather, a trifle larger than the human foot, some leather thongs, and a sharp curved knife. Adjoining the market, facing an open square, rises a great building supported by immense square pillars

forming an arcade. At the foot of each pillar a garrulous Mexican shouts out the wares of his impromptu shop at half minute intervals. Then comes the alameda or public garden, bright with flowers and semi-tropical plants, with a summer-house of the time-honored pattern, octagon, lined with benches and in the centre a table containing, as usual, the fragments of the last lounger's lunch.

Here I rested out of the glare and din.

Suddenly, while looking down upon the street across the green, listening to the plash of the fountain and watching the señoritas on their way to mass, I saw a rush of people crowding the streets below, and heard the clear musical notes of a woman's voice rising above the street cries. As the mob forced its way past the corner leading from the cathedral and up the main street fronting me, I caught sight of a ceremony not often seen in Zacatécas, certainly but rarely met with elsewhere.

In the middle of the street, upon their knees on the rough stones, walked or rather crawled two native Indian girls

dressed in white, their heads bare, their black hair streaming down their backs, their eyes aflame with excitement. Both clasped to their breasts a small crucifix. Surrounding them were a dozen half-crazed devotees, whose frenzied cries swelled the chant of the youngest penitent. Suddenly, from out a pulque shop on the opposite corner, darted three men, evidently peons. With a quick movement they divided the pressing crowd, sprang ahead of the girls, and, tearing their own zarapes from their shoulders, threw them in turn in front of the penitents. As the girls crawled across them, the first peon would again seize his zarape, run ahead, and respread it.

"It is a penance, señor," said a bystander, evidently a Spaniard, "not often seen here. The girls believe they have committed some great sin. They are on their way to Los Remedios, the chapel that you see on the hill yonder. But for these drunken peons they would leave a bloody track."

Whether drunk or sober, by bigot or scoffer, it was a graceful act. Surely the

gallant Sir Walter paid no more courtly tribute to the good Queen Bess when he threw his cloak beneath her dainty feet than did these poor peons to their dusky sisters.

But it was still some hours before the padre would be at leisure and I get definite news of my coveted chair.

I would lunch at the Zacatecano, formerly the old Augustinian convent, now the only inn this quaint old town can boast of, take a run by the tram to Guadaloupe past the silver mines, and be back in time for the sacristan.

As I entered, the landlord extended both hands as if he had been my dearest friend. He proved to be, later.

"Certainly, señor. What shall it be? We have a cutlet; we also have a salad. Beer? Plenty. San Louis, Bass, Mexican. Which shall I open for the illustrious painter?"

The painter ordered a bottle of Bass, and being thirsty and a long way from home, and with the remembrance of many a foaming tankard in other benighted quarters of the earth, ordered another.

If the landlord was polite at the first bottle, he became positively servile at the second. A third would have finished him, and my bank account. From the bill I learned that one bottle of Bass is equal to the wages of one able-bodied man working five days ; two bottles, the price of a donkey ; three bottles, no man can calculate.

Thus it is that a cruel government grinds the masses !

But the cutlet was tender and juicy, with just a dash of garlic ; the salad of lettuce of a wrinkled and many seamed variety, with sprays of red pepper cut exceedingly fine and scattered through it, and, blessed be Bass ! the priceless bottles were full of the same old amber-colored nectar one always draws from under the same old compact, tin-foil covered corks.

But to Guadaloupe and back before mass ended.

You reach this suburb of Zacatécas by a modern tramway which starts a car every hour ; a sort of Mexican toboggan-slide, for the whole six miles is down hill by gravity. At the other end is the *Iglesia*

y Capilla de Guadaloupe, — an exquisite modern chapel, — besides an old garden, a new market, a straggling suburb, and various teams of mules to toboggan you back again.

I stepped from the car and began sightseeing. The chapel, the gift of a pious lady, is semi-oriental with its creamy-white minarets shooting up from behind a mass of dark cedars relieved against the intense blue sky; the garden is overrun with sweet peas, poppies, calla lilies, and geraniums blooming amidst fleecy acacia-trees waving in the dazzling sunlight; the market has the usual collection of coarse pottery and green vegetables, with gay booths hung with bright zarapes and rebozos, and the straggling suburb is as picturesque and full of color as any other Mexican suburban village. I noted them all and each one, and they interested me intensely.

One other thing interested me infinitely more. It was an individual who came to my rescue in the midst of a dislocated Spanish sentence. I was at the moment in a curious old cloister adjoining the new chapel of Guadaloupe, examining with the

aid of a rotund attendant the diabolical pictures that lined its walls, when a tall, well-built young fellow wearing a slouch hat stopped immediately in front of the most repulsive canvas of the collection, and, after listening to my halting inquiry, supplied the missing word in excellent Spanish. Then shifting his hat to the opposite ear, he pointed to the supposed portrait of an ancient martyr surrounded by lurid flames behind iron bars, and remarked quietly : —

"Beastly ugly old saint, is n't he? Looks like an underdone steak on a grill."

"You speak English, then?"

"Why not? You would n't want me to cling to this jargon forever, would you?"

From that instant the collection was forgotten.

He was about thirty years of age, with a bronzed face, curling mustachios, and arching eyebrows that shaded a pair of twinkling brown eyes. A sort of devil-may-care air seemed to pervade him, coupled with a certain recklessness discernible even in the way he neglected his upper vest buttons, and tossed one end of

his cravat over his shoulder. He wore a large, comfortable, easily adjusted slouch hat which he kept constantly in motion, using it as some men do their hands to emphasize their sentences. If the announcement was somewhat startling the hat would be flattened out against the back of his head, the broad brim standing out in a circle, and framing the face, which changed with every thought behind it. If of a confidential nature it was pulled down on the side next to you like the pirate's in the play. If his communication might offend ears polite, he used one edge of it as a lady would a fan, and, from behind it, gave you a morsel of scandal with such point and pith that you forgave its raciness because of the crisp and breezy way with which it was imparted.

He hailed from New Orleans; had lived in Zacatécas two years; in western Mexico ten more; was an engineer by profession; had constructed part of the International road, and was now looking after some of its interests in Zacatécas.

"My name? Moon. Fits exactly, my dear fellow, for I 'm generally up all night.

Been here long?" He rattled on. "You ought to stay a month. Richest town in all Mexico. Just a solid silver mine under your feet all the way from here to Zacatécas. Best people I know anywhere, and more pretty girls to the square mile than any spot on this terrestrial."

And then followed a running description of his life here and at home, interspersed with various accounts of his scrapes and escapades, from which I gathered that he knew everybody in Zacatécas, including the priest, the commandant, and the pretty girl in the balcony. This biographical sketch was further enriched by such additional details as his once filling a holy father full of cognac to induce him to grant a right of way for a railroad through the convent garden: of his being helped out of prison by the governor, who was his friend and who locked up his accuser; and of his making love to a certain charming señorita whenever he got a chance, which, he declared, was now precious seldom, owing to a cross-eyed mother who saw both ways at once, and a duenna who hated him.

Would I take the tram and go back to Zacatécas with him?

Yes, if he would stop at the cathedral at five and wait until vespers were over.

"So you have caught on, have you?" Then in a confidential manner: "Come, now, give me her name. Reckon I know her. Bet it 's the black-eyed girl with the high comb. She 's always cutting her eye at the last stranger."

It was difficult to make this dare-devil of a Southerner understand that my engagement was entirely with a simple-minded, mild-eyed old sacristan, and not with one of Zacatécas' bewitching señoritas.

"What sacristan? Old Miguel? A greasy-looking, bandy-legged old baldhead? Wears a green jacket?"

I admitted that the description classified him to some extent.

Moon broke out into a laugh that started the six mules in a gallop up the tramway.

Did he know him? Well, he should think so. Best post-office in Zacatécas, especially at very early mass. What was he doing for me? Smuggling letters?

No, buying a chair.

Moon laid one hand tenderly on my shoulder, shifted his slouch hat over his right ear, and in his peculiar vernacular characterized my statement as "diaphonous," and then in a coaxing tone demanded the name of the girl.

"My friend, there *is* no girl. Wait until we pass the cathedral. It is now five o'clock. The sacristan is expecting me in the garden and he shall tell you the rest. There he is now waiting under the palms."

"See here, Miguel," broke in Moon as we alighted, ignoring the sacristan's obsequious salutations. "What about this girl's chair? Come, out with it."

Miguel looked at Moon and then turned to me and smiled grimly.

"It is always the señoritas with señor Moon," he said, and then he repeated our interview of the morning, winding up with my incomprehensible infatuation for the four-legged relic, and his unsuccessful efforts with the padre to sell or exchange it for any number of new chairs, great or small.

"It is really impossible, señor painter. The padre says it is an old one of many years," continued the sacristan.

"If the painter wants the old ruin, he shall have it, you bow-legged old mail-bag."

"The padre will not, Señor Moon; not for ten new ones. I have exhausted everything."

"What padre?" replied Moon.

"Padre Ignatius."

"Old Ig is it? No, he would n't part with an adobe brick." Then turning to me: "What did you tell him you wanted it for?"

"For my studio."

"Studio be ——. Go, Miguel, and tell Padre Ignatius that my very old and very dear friend, the painter, is a devout Catholic from the holy city of New York; that he has an uncle, a holy father, in fact, a bishop, who is very poor and who charged him to bring from the ancient city of Zacatécas a sacred relic from this very church, and that this aged, low-backed old cripple of a chair will exactly fill the bill. Go! *Vête!* But stop!" (In a lower

tone.) "Did you give it to her — the little one — when — after early mass? *Bueno!*"

A long wait at the door of the sacristy; then a footfall in the darkening twilight.

"Señor, the padre says he will consider. The price is of course very small, and but that your uncle the holy bishop is very poor it could not be, but as a" —

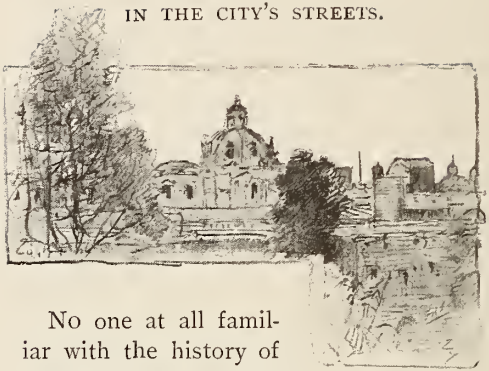
"Hold up, Miguel. All right. Send the chair to the painter's lodgings."

When I reached the church door and the street and looked back, I could see the red towers of the cathedral gleaming pink and yellow in the fading light of the afterglow, and far up the crooked street I could hear my voluble friend of an afternoon whistling an air from Norma.

At the door of my lodgings I found the chair.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE CITY'S STREETS.



No one at all familiar with the history of Mexico can wander about the streets and suburbs of this its principal city without seeing at every turn some evidence of the vast changes which have marked its past, and which have made its story so thrilling.

If Prescott's pleasing fiction of Teocallis towering to the stars, the smoke of whose sacrifices curled upwards day and night; of gorgeous temples, of hanging

and floating gardens, myriads of feather-clad warriors armed with spear and shield, swarms of canoes brilliant as tropical birds, and of a court surrounding Montezuma and Guatimotzin, more lavish than the wildest dream of the Orient, — if all this is true, — and I prefer to believe it rather than break the gods of my childhood, — so also is the great plaza of the cathedral, and the noble edifice itself with splendid façade and majestic twin towers, the hundreds of churches about which cluster the remains of convent, monastery, and hospital; the wide paseos, the tropical gardens, the moss-bearded cypresses four centuries old under which the disheartened Aztec monarch mourned the loss of his kingdom, the palaces of the viceroys, the alamedas and their fountains.

If you push aside the broad-leaved plants in the grand plaza you will find heaped up and half covered with tangled vines the broken fragments of rudely carved stones, once the glory of an Aztec temple. If you climb down the steep hill under Chapultepec and break away the matted

underbrush, you will discover the mutilated effigy of Ahuitzotl, the last of Montezuma's predecessors, stretched out on the natural rock, the same the ancient sculptor selected for his chisel in the days when the groves about him echoed with song, and when these same gnarled cypresses gave grateful shadow to priest, emperor, and slave.

Stroll out to Santa Anita; examine the *chinampas* — the floating gardens of the old Mexican race. They are still there, overgrown with weeds and anchored by neglect. As in the old times so now on every feast day the narrow canal of *las Vigas* leading to the *chinampas* is crowded with boats; the maidens bind wreaths of poppies about their heads, and the dance and song and laughter of the light-hearted race — light-hearted when even for a day they lay their burdens down — still rings out in the twilight air.

The two civilizations, the pagan and the Christian, are still distinct to those who look below the surface. Time has not altered them materially. Even to-day in the hollows of the mountains and amid

the dense groves on the tropical slopes, the natives steal away and prostrate themselves before the stone images of their gods, and in the churches of the more remote provinces the parish priest has found more than once the rude sculptured idol concealed behind the Christian altar. To the kneeling peon the ugly stone is his sole hope of safety and forgiveness.

Important changes are taking place, however, which predict a happier future for Mexico. The monastery of San Hipólito, once the palace of Bucareli, now contains a printing press. The convent of Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion is a public school. The church of San Agustin, a public library, and through the silent arches of many cloisters, and through many a secluded convent garden run broad avenues filled with the gay life of the metropolis. Moreover to-day, every man, be he pagan, Christian, or Jew, may worship his particular god according to the dictates of his own conscience, in any form that pleases him.

Nothing so pointedly marks for me the strange contrasts which these changes

have brought about, as my own quarters at the Hotel Jardin.

I am living in two rooms at the end of a long balcony overlooking a delicious garden, redolent with azaleas, pomegranates, and jasmine, in full bloom. I am at the extreme end of the balcony, which is several hundred feet long, and next to me is a stained and battered wall, incrusted with moss and lichen, supported by buttresses running sheer into the poppy beds. This wall sustains one side of a building which is surmounted by a quaint tile roof.

My rooms are high-ceiled and spacious, and floored with red brick. The walls, judged from the width of the door jambs, are of unusual strength.

At the other end of the balcony, from out the roof, rises a dome which glistens in the setting sun. It is covered with exquisite Spanish tiles of blue and yellow, each one of which forms part of a picture telling the story of the Cross. Beyond the garden, several squares away, cut sharp against the afternoon sky, curves the beautiful dome of the cathedral of San

Francisco, beneath whose frescoed roof once rested the bones of Cortez.

Scarce twenty-five years ago the square bounded by this little dome with the Spanish tiles, this great dome of the cathedral, and the outside of the mould-stained convent wall, formed the great religious foundation of San Francisco, the richest and most powerful of the ecclesiastical holdings in Mexico. From this spot radiated the commanding influence of the order. Here masses were heard by Cortez. Here through three centuries the great festi-

vals of the church were taken part in by the viceroys. Here was sung the first Te Deum of Mexican independence, and here seventeen years later were held the magnificent funeral services of the liberator Yturbide.

How great the changes! To-day a Protestant congregation worships in the grand old cathedral, its interior a horror of whitewash and emptiness; a modern hotel supplants the old infirmary and palace of the commissioners general of the order; a public livery stables its horses in the refectory, and four broad streets traverse the length and breadth of the sacred ground, irrespective of chancel, cloister, or garden. Through the top of the exquisite cupola surmounting the little glazed tile dome covering the chapel of San Antonio is thrust a sheet iron stovepipe. Within this once beautiful house of prayer, the space covered by the altar is now occupied by an enormous French range, upon which is ruined all the food of the Hotel Jardin. In the delightful arched windows piles of dirty dishes replace the swinging lamps; near an exit

where once stood the font, a plate-warmer of an eastern pattern gives out an oily odor; and where the acolytes swung their censers, to-day swarms a perspiring mob of waiters urgent to be served by a *chef* who officiates in the exact spot where the holy archbishop celebrated high mass.

High on the cornice of the dome still clings the figure of San Domingo. His

wooden bones and carved teeth should rattle and chatter themselves loose as he gazes down upon the awful sacrilege, for above him, where once the wings of the

Dove of the Holy Spirit overspread the

awe-hushed penitents, now twists with a convenient iron elbow a rusty pipe, that carries the foul breath of this impious

range into the pure air of the heaven above.

As I sit on my section of the balcony and paint, I can see within a few yards of my easel an open window, framed in the mouldy convent wall. The golden sunlight streams in, and falls upon the weather-stained stones, and massive iron bound shutter, touches a strip of dainty white curtain and rests lovingly upon the head of a peon girl who sits all day sewing, and crooning to herself a quaint song. She watches me now and then with great wondering eyes. As I work I hear the low hum of a sewing-machine keeping time to her melody. Suddenly there is a quick movement among the matted leaves clinging to the festering wall, and from out a dark crevice creeps a slimy snake-like lizard. He listens and raises his green head and glides noiselessly into the warm sunlight. There he stretches his lithe body and basks lazily.

I laid down my brushes, and fell into a revery. The sunlight, the dark-eyed Indian girl, the cheery hum of her shuttle, and the loathsome lizard crawling from

out the ruins of a dead convent wall told me the whole story of Mexico.

The old church of San Hipólito stands within a stone's throw of the spot where Alvarado, Cortez's greatest captain, is said to have made his famous leap on that eventful night of July 1, 1520, the Noche Triste. Indeed, it was built by one of the survivors of that massacre, Juan Garido, in commemoration of its horrors. Not the present structure, but a little chapel of adobe, which eighty years later was pulled down to make room for the edifice of to-day. You can still see upon the outside wall surrounding the atrium of the present building a commemorative stone tablet, bearing alto-relievos of arms, trophies, and devices of the ancient Mexicans, with this inscription : —

" So great was the slaughter of Spaniards by the Aztecs in this place on the night of July 1, 1520, named for this reason the Dismal Night, that after having in the following year reëntered the city triumphantly, the conquerors resolved to build here a chapel, to be called the Chapel of the Martyrs ; and which should

be dedicated to San Hipólito, because the capture of the city occurred upon that saint's day."

Janvier says: "Until the year 1812, there was celebrated annually on the 13th of August at this church a solemn ceremony, both religious and civil, known as the Procession of the Banner (*Paseo del pendon*), in which the viceroy and the great officers of the State and the nobility together with the archbishops and dignitaries of the Church took part. Its principal feature was the carrying in state of the crimson banner formerly borne by the conquerors, and still preserved in the National Museum."

There was nothing to indicate the existence of any such ceremony the day I strolled into its quiet courtyard. The wooden gates, sagging and rotting on their hinges, were thrown back invitingly, but the broad flags of the pavement, overgrown with weeds and stubby grass thrust up between the cracks, showed but too plainly how few entered them.

Some penitents crossed the small inclosure in front of me, and disappeared

within the cool doorway of the church. I turned to the left, hugged the grateful shadow of the high walls, reached the angle, opened my easel and began to paint.

It has a very dignified portal, this old church of San Hipólito, with half doors panelled and painted green, and with great whitewashed statues of broken-nosed saints flanking each side, and I was soon lost in the study of its ornament and color. For a while nobody disturbed me or gave me more than a passing glance.

Presently I was conscious that an old fellow watering some plants across the court was watching me anxiously. When I turned again he stood beside me.

"Señor, why do you sit and look at the church?"

"To take it home with me, *mi amigo*."

"That cannot be. I will tell the padre."

He was gone before I could explain. In five minutes he returned, pale and trembling and without his hat. Behind him came an old priest with a presence like a benediction. Clinging to his hands were two boys, one with eyes like diamonds.

Before I could explain the old man's face lighted up with a kindly smile, and he extended his hand.

"Nicolas is very foolish, señor. Do not mind him. Stay where you are. After service you can sit within the church and paint the interior, if you like. If the boys will not annoy you, please let them watch you. It will teach them something."

The little fellows did not wait for any further discussion. They both kissed his hand, and crept behind my easel. The youngest, with the diamond eyes, Pacheco, told me without drawing his breath his name, his age, where he went to school, that the good padre was his uncle, that his father had been dead forever almost, and that they lived across the way with their mother. The oldest stood by silently watching every movement of my brush as if his life depended on it.

"And do you love the padre?" I asked, turning towards him.

"Yes." He replied in a quick decided tone as if it was a sacrilege to question

it. "And so would you. Everybody, *everybody* loves the padre."

"Is it not true?" This last to the sacristan, who had come out to see the painter, the service having begun.

The sacristan not only confirmed this, but gave me a running account of the misfortunes of the church even in his day, of its great poverty, of the changes he had seen himself. No more processions, no more grand masses; on Easter Sunday there was not even money enough to buy candles. He remembered a lamp as high as this wall that was stolen by the government, — this in a whisper behind his hand, — all solid silver, and a pair of candlesticks as big round as the tree yonder, all melted down to pay for soldiers. *Caramba!* It was terrible. But for the holy padre there would be no service at all. When the padre was young he lived in the priest's house and rode in his carriage. Now he is an old man, and must live with his sister over a posada. The world was certainly coming to an end.

I let the old sacristan ramble along, wishing the service over, that I might see

again the good padre whom everybody loved.

Soon the handful of people who, during the previous hour, had stolen in, as it were, one by one, crowded up the doorway and dispersed. It was a meagre gathering at best.

Then the old priest came out into the sunlight, and shaded his eyes with his hand, searching for me in the shadowed angle of the wall. As he walked across the court I had time to note the charming dignity of his manner, and the almost childlike smile that played across his features. His hair was silver white, his black frock faded and patched, though neatly kept, and his broad hat of a pattern and date of long ago. The boys sprang up, ran to him, caught him about the knees, and kissed his hands. Not as if it was a mark of devotion or respect, but as if they could not help it. The sacristan uncovered his head. For myself, I must confess that I was bareheaded and on my feet before I knew it. Would I come to his house and have a cup of coffee with him? It was but across the

street. The sacristan would see that my traps were not disturbed. At this the boys danced up and down, broke through the gate, and when we reached the narrow door that led to the balcony above, Pacheco had already dragged his mother to the railing, to see the painter the good padre was bringing home.

It was a curious home for a priest. There were but three rooms, all fronting on a balcony of the second floor, overlooking a garden in which clothes were drying among and above the foliage. It was clean and cheery, however. Some pots of flowers bloomed in the windows, and there was a rocking-chair covered with a cotton cloth, a lounge with cushions, a few books and knickknacks, besides a square table holding a brass crucifix and two candles. In the corner of the adjoining room was an iron bedstead and a few articles of furniture. This was where the padre slept.

"The times are changed, good father?" I asked, when he had finished filling his cup.

"Yes, my son, and for the worse." And

then clearly but without bitterness, or any other feeling apparently, except the deepest sorrow, he told me the story of the downfall of his church in Mexico. It is needless to repeat it here. The old father thought only of the pomp, and splendor, and power for good, of the religion he loved, and could not see the degradation of the days he mourned. Within a stone's throw of where we sat the flowers were blooming, and the palms waving in the plaza of San Diego, over the exact spot where, less than a century ago, the smoke of the *auto de fé* curled away in the sunlight. I did not remind him of it. His own life had been so full of every good deed, and Christian charity, and all his own waking hours had been so closely spent either at altar or bedside, that he could not have understood how terrible could be the power of the Church he revered, perverted and misused.

When he ceased he drew a deep sigh, rose from his chair, and disappeared into the adjoining room. In a few moments he returned, bearing in his arms a beautiful cope embroidered in silver on white satin.

"This, my son," said he, "is the last relic of value in San Hipólito. It is, as you see, very precious, and very old. A present from Pope Innocent XII., who sent it to the brotherhood, the Hipólitos, in the year 1700. The pieces that came with it, the chasubles, stole, and other vestments are gone. This I keep by my bedside."

He folded it carefully, returned it to its hiding-place, and accompanied me to the outer door. I can see him now, his white hair glistening in the light, the boys clinging to his hands.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE PASEO.

The English dogcart and the French bonnet have just broken out in the best society of Mexico. The disease doubtless came in with the railroads.

At present the cases are sporadic, and only the young caballero who knows Piccadilly and the gay señorita who has watched the brilliant procession pass under the Arc de Triomphe are affected. But it is nevertheless

evident that in the larger cities the contagion is spreading, and that in a few years it will become epidemic.

Nowhere should the calamity of a change in national habits and costumes be more regretted than here. Stroll up the Paseo de la Reforma at sundown, — the Champs Élysées of Mexico, — and watch the endless procession of open carriages filled with beautiful women with filmy mantillas shading their dark eyes, the countless riders mounted on spirited horses, with saddle pommels hung with lasso and lariat; run your eye along the sidewalk thronged with people, and over the mounted soldiers in intermittent groups, policing the brilliant pageant, and tell me if anywhere else in the world you have seen so rich and novel a sight.

A carriage passes, and a velvet-eyed beauty in saluting an admirer drops her handkerchief. In an instant he wheels, dashes forward, and before you can think, he has picked up the dainty perfumed cambric from the dust without leaving his saddle, and all with the ease and grace of a Comanche.

Should a horse become unmanageable and plunge down the overcrowded thoroughfare, there are half a dozen riders within sight who can overtake him before he has run a stone's throw, loop a lasso over his head, and tumble him into the road. Not ranchmen out for an afternoon airing, but kid-gloved dandies in white buckskin and silver, with waxed moustaches, who learned this trick on the haciendas when they were boys, and to whom it is as easy as breathing. It is difficult to imagine any succeeding generation sitting back-a-back to a knee-breeched flunkey, and driving a curtailed cob before a pair of lumbering cart-wheels.

Analyze the features of a Spanish or Mexican beauty. The purple-black hair, long drooping lashes, ivory-white skin, the sinking, half-swooning indolence of her manner. Note how graceful and becoming are the clinging folds of her mantilla, falling to the shoulders, and losing itself in the undulating lines of her exquisite figure. Imagine a cockchafer of a bonnet, an abomination of beads, bows, and ban-

gles, surmounting this ideal inamorata. The shock is about as great as if some scoffer tied a seaside hat under the chin of the Venus de Milo.

Verily the illustrated newspaper and the ready-made clothing man have reduced the costume of the civilized and semi-barbarous world to the level of the commonplace! I thank my lucky stars that I still know a few out-of-the-way corners where the castanet and high-heeled shoe, the long, flowing, many-colored tunic, the white sabot and snowy cap, and the sandal and sombrero, are still left to delight me with their picturesqueness, their harmony of color and grace.

All these reflections came to me as I strolled up the Reforma, elbowing my way along, avoiding the current, or crossing it, for the shelter of one of the tree trunks lining the sidewalks, behind which I made five-minute outlines of the salient features of the moving panorama. When I reached the statue of Columbus, the crowd became uncomfortable, especially that part which had formed a "cue," with the head looking over my sketch-book, and so I

hailed a cab and drove away towards the castle of Chapultepec. The Paseo ends at this famous spot.

The fortress is built upon a hill that rises some two hundred feet above the valley, and is environed by a noble park and garden, above which tower the famous groves of hoary cypresses. On this commanding eminence once stood the palace of Montezuma, if we may believe the traditions. Indeed, Prescott dilates with enthusiasm upon the details of its splendor, and of its luxuriant adornment, these same cypresses playing an important part in the charming extravaganza with which he delighted our youth. The records say that when the haughty Spaniard knocked at the city's gate and demanded his person, his treasure, and his arms, the vacillating monarch retired to the cool shadows of these then ancient groves, collected together a proper percentage of his wives, and wept. This may be fiction, and that pious old monk, Bernal Diaz, Cortez's scribe, inspired by a lively sense of the value of his own head, and with a loyal desire to save

his master's, may alone be responsible for it.

For this I care little. The trees are still here, the very same old gnarled and twisted trunks. The tawny Indian in feathers, the grim cavalier in armor; fine ladies in lace; hidalgos in velvet, all the gay throngs who have enlivened these shady aisles, each bedecked after the manner and custom of their times, are gone. But the old trees still stand.

What the great kings of Tenochtitlan saw as they looked up into their sheltering branches, I see: the ribbed brown bark sparkling with gray green lichen; the sweep of the wrinkled trunk rushing upward into outspreading arms; the clear sky turquoised amid matted foliage; the gray moss waving in the soft air. With these alive and above me, I can imagine the rest, and so I pick out a particularly comfortable old root that curves out from beneath one of the great giants, and sit me down and persuade myself that all the Aztec kings have been wont to rest their bones thereon. From where I lounge, I can see away up among the top branches

the castle and buildings of the military school, and at intervals hear the bugle sounding the afternoon's drill. Later I toil up the steep ascent, and from the edge of the stone parapet skirting the bluff, drink in the glory and beauty of perhaps the finest landscape in the world.

There are two views which always rise up in my memory when a grand panoramic vision bursts upon me suddenly. One is from a spot in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, in Granada, called "La Ultima Suspira de Mores." It is where Boabdil stood and wept when he looked for the last time over the beautiful valley of the Vega, — the loveliest garden in Spain, — the red towers and terraces of the Alhambra bathed in the setting sun. The other is this great sweep of plain, and distant mountain range, with all its wealth of palm, orange, and olive; the snow-capped twin peaks dominating the horizon; the silver line of the distant lakes, and the fair city, the Tenochtitlan of the ancient, the Eldorado of Cortez, sparkling like a jewel in the midst of this vast stretch of green and gold.

Both monarchs wept over their dominions. Boabdil, that the power of his race which for six hundred years had ruled Spain was broken, and that the light of the Crescent had paled forever in the effulgence of the rising Cross. Montezuma, that the fires of his temples had forever gone out, and that henceforward his people were slaves.

Sitting here alone on this stone parapet, watching the fading sunlight and the long creeping shadows and comparing Mexico and Spain of to-day with what we know to be true of the Moors, and what we hope was true of the Aztecs, and being in a reflective frame of mind, it becomes a question with me whether the civilized world ought not to have mingled their tears with both potentates. The delightful historian sums it up in this way: —

"Spain has the unenviable credit of having destroyed two great civilizations."

Full of these reveries, and with the question undecided, I retraced my steps past the boy sentinels, down the long hill, through the gardens and cypresses, and out into the broad road skirting the great

aqueduct of Bucareli. There I hailed a cab, and whirled into the city brilliant with lights, and so home to my lodgings overlooking the old convent garden.

CHAPTER VIII.

PALM SUNDAY IN PUEBLA DE LOS ANGELES.

Some one hundred miles from the city of Mexico, and within twice that distance of Vera Cruz and the sea, and some seven thousand feet up into the clear, crisp air, lies the city of Puebla. The streets are broad and clean, the plazas filled with trees and rich in flowers, the markets exceptionally interesting. Above this charming city tower, like huge sentinels, the two great volcanoes Popocatapetl and Iztaccihuatl.

The legend of its founding is quaint and somewhat characteristic; moreover, there is no shadow of doubt as to its truth.

The good Fray Julian Garces, the first consecrated bishop of the Catholic Church in Mexico, conceived the most praiseworthy plan of founding, somewhere between the coast and the city of Mexico, a haven of refuge and safe resting-place for weary travellers. Upon one eventful night, when his mind was filled with this noble resolve, he beheld a lovely plain, bounded by the great slope of the volcanoes, watered by two rivers, and dotted by many ever-living springs, making all things fresh and green. As he gazed, his eyes beheld two angels with line and rod, measuring bounds and distances upon the ground. After seeing the vision, the bishop awoke, and that very hour set out to search for the site the angels had shown him; upon finding which he joyously exclaimed, "This is the site the Lord has chosen through his holy angels, and here shall the city be;" and even now the most charming and delightful of all the cities on the southern slope is this Puebla de los Angeles. Nothing has occurred since to shake confidence in the wisdom of the good bishop, nor impair the

value of his undertaking, and to-day the idler, the antiquary, and the artist rise up and call him blessed.

But the pious bishop did not stop here.

As early as 1536 he laid the corner-stone of the present cathedral, completed one hundred and fifty years later. This noble edifice, in its interior adornments, lofty nave, broad aisles divided by massive stone columns, inlaid floor of colored marble, altars, chapels, and choirs, as well as in its grand exterior, raised upon a terrace and surmounted by majestic towers, is by far the most stately and beautiful of all the great buildings of Mexico.

Before I reached the huge swinging doors, carved and heavily ironed, I knew it was Palm Sunday; for the streets were filled with people, each one carrying a long thin leaf of the sago palm, and the balconies with children twisting the sacred leaves over the iron railings, to mark a blessing for the house until the next festival.

I had crossed the plaza, where I had been loitering under the trees, making memoranda in my sketch-book of the groups of Indians lounging on the benches in the shade, and sketching the outlines of bunches of little donkeys dozing in the sun; and, mounting the raised terrace upon which the noble pile is built, found myself in the cool, incense-laden interior. The aisles were a moving mass of people waving palms over their heads, the vista looking like great fields of ferns in the wind. The service was still in progress, and the distant bursts of the organ resounded at intervals through the arches.

I wedged my way between the throngs of worshippers, — some kneeling, some shuffling along, keeping step with the

crowd, — past the inlaid stalls, exquisite carvings, and gilded figures of saints, until I reached the door of the sacristy. I always search out the sacristy. It contains the movable property of the church, and as I have a passion for moving it, — when the sacristan is of the same mind, — I always find it the most attractive corner of any sacred interior.

The room was superb. The walls were covered with paintings set in gilded frames; the chests of drawers were crammed with costly vestments; two exquisite tables covered with slabs of onyx stood on one side, while upon a raised shelf above them were ranged eight superb Japanese Imari jars, — for water, I presumed.

When I entered, a line of students near the door were being robed in white starched garments by the sacristan; groups of priests, in twos and threes, some in vestments, others in street robes, were chatting together on an old settle; and an aged, white-haired bishop was listening intently to a young priest dressed in a dark purple gown, — both outlined against

an open window. The whole effect reminded me of one of Vibert's pictures. I was so absorbed that I remained motionless in the middle of the room, gazing awkwardly about. The next moment the light was shut out, and I half smothered in the folds of a muslin skirt. I had been mistaken for a student chorister, and the sacristan would have slipped the garment over my head but for my breathless protest. Had I known the service, I think I should have risked the consequences.

The sacristy opened into the chapter-room. The wanderer who thinks he must go to Italy to find grand interiors should stand at the threshold of this room and look in; or, still better, rest his weary bones for half an hour within the perfectly proportioned, vaulted, and domed apartment, hung with Flemish tapestry and covered with paintings, and examine it at his leisure. He can select any one of the superb old Spanish chairs presented by Charles V., thirty-two of which line the walls; then, being rested, he can step into the middle of the room, and feast his eyes upon a single slab of Mexican onyx cover-

ing a table large enough for a grand council of bishops. I confess I stood for an instant amazed, wondering whether I was really in Mexico, across its thousand miles of dust, or had wandered into some old palace or church in Verona or Padua.

At the far end of this chapter-room sat a grave-looking priest, absorbed in his breviary. I approached him, hat in hand.

"Holy father, I am a stranger and a painter. I know the service is in progress, and that I should not now intrude; but this room is so beautiful, and my stay in Puebla so short, that I must crave your permission to enter."

He laid down his book. "*Mi amigo*, you are welcome. Wander about where you will, here and by the altar. You will disturb no one. You painters always revere the church, for within its walls your greatest works are held sacred."

I thought that very neat for a priest just awakened from a reverie, and, thanking him, examined greedily the superb old carved chair he had just vacated. I did revere the church, and told him so, but all the same I coveted the chair, and but

for his compliment and devout air would have dared to open negotiations for its possession. I reasoned, iconoclast that I am, that it would hardly be missed among its fellows, and that perhaps one of those frightful renovations, constantly taking place in Mexican churches, might overtake this beautiful room, when new mahogany horrors might replace these exquisite relics of the sixteenth century, and the whole set be claimed by the second-hand man or the wood pile.

Then I strolled out into the church with that vacant air which always marks one in a building new to him, — especially when it overwhelms him, — gazing up at the nave, reading the inscriptions under the pictures, and idling about the aisles. Soon I came to a confessional box. There I sat down behind a protecting column.

There is a fascination about the confessional which I can never escape. Here sits the old news-gatherer and safe-deposit vault of everybody's valuable secrets, peaceful and calm within the seclusion of his grated cabinet; and here come a troop of people, telling him all the good

and bad things of their lives, and leaving with him for safe-keeping their most precious property, — their misdeeds. What a collection of broken bonds, dishonored names, and debts of ingratitude must he be custodian of!

The good father before me was a kindly faced, plethoric old man; a little deaf, I should judge, from the fanning motion of his left hand, forming a sounding-board for his ear. About him were a group of penitents, patiently awaiting their turns. When I halted and sought the shelter of the pillar, the closely veiled and muffled figure of a richly dressed señora was bowed before him. She remained a few moments, and then slipped away, and another figure took her place at the grating.

I raised my eyes wistfully, wondering whether I could read the old fellow's face, which was in strong light, sufficiently well to get some sort of an inkling of her confidences; but no cloud of sorrow, or ruffle of anger, or gleam of curiosity passed over it. It was as expressionless as a harvest moon, and placid as a mountain lake. At times I even fancied he was

asleep; then his little eyes would open slowly and peep out keenly, and I knew he had only been assorting and digesting his several informations.

One after another they dropped away silently, — the Indian in his zarape, the old man in sandals, and the sad-faced woman with a black rebozo twisted about her throat. Each had prostrated himself, and poured through that six inches of space the woes that weighed heavy on his soul. The good father listened to them all. His patience and equanimity seemed marvellous.

I became so engrossed that I forgot I was an eavesdropper, and could make no sort of excuse for my vulgar curiosity which would satisfy any one upon whose privacy I intruded; and, coming to this conclusion, was about to shoulder my trap and move off, when I caught sight of a short, thick-set young Mexican, muffled to his chin in a zarape. He was leaning against the opposite column, watching earnestly the same confessional box, his black, bead-like eyes riveted upon the priest. In his hand he held a small red

cap, with which he partially concealed his face. It was not prepossessing, the forehead being low and receding, and the mouth firm and cruel.

As each penitent turned away, the man edged nearer to the priest, with a movement that attracted me. It was like that of an animal slowly yielding to the power of a snake. He was now so close that I could see great drops of sweat running down his temples; his breath came thick and short; his whole form, sturdy fellow as he was, trembled and shook. The cap was now clenched in his fist and pressed to his breast, — the eyes still fastened on the priest, and the feet moving a few inches at a time. When the last penitent had laid her face against the grating, he fell upon his knees behind her, and buried his face in his hands. When she was gone, he threw himself forward in her place, and clutched the grating with a moan that startled me.

I arose from my seat, edged around the pillar, and got the light more clearly on the priest's face. It was as calm and serene as a wooden saint's.

For a few moments the Mexican lay in a heap at the grating ; then he raised his head, and looked cautiously about him. I shrank into the shadow. The face was ghastly pale, the lips trembled, the eyes started from his head. The priest leaned forward wearily, his ear to the iron lattice. The man's lips began to move ; the confession had begun. Both figures remained motionless, the man whispering eagerly, and the priest listening patiently. Suddenly the good father started forward, bent down, and scanned the man's face searchingly through the grating. In another instant he uttered a half-smothered cry of horror, covered his face with the sleeve of his robe, and fell back on his seat.

The man edged around on his knees from the side grating to the front of the confessional, and bowed his head to the lower step of the box. For several minutes neither moved. I flattened myself against the column, and became a part of the architecture. Then the priest, with blanched face, leaned forward over the half door, and laid his hand on the peni-

tent. The man raised his head, clutched the top of the half door, bent forward, and glued his lips to the priest's ear. I reached down noiselessly for my sketch-trap, peeled myself from the column as one would a wet handbill, and, keeping the pillar between me and the confessional, made a straight line for the sacristy.

Before I reached the door the priest overtook me, crossed the room, and disappeared through a smaller door in the opposite wall. I turned to avoid him, and caught sight of the red cap of the Mexican pressing his way hurriedly to the street. Waiting until he was lost in the throng, I drew a long breath, and dropped upon a bench.

The faces of both man and priest haunted me. I had evidently been the unsuspected witness of one of those strange confidences existing in Catholic countries between the criminal and the Church. I had also been in extreme personal danger. A crime so terrible that the bare recital of it shocked to demoralization so unimpressionable a priest as the good father

was safe in his ear alone. Had there been a faint suspicion in the man's mind that I had overheard any part of his story, my position would have been dangerous.

But what could have been the crime? I reflected that even an inquiry looking towards its solution would be equally hazardous, and so tried to banish the incident from my mind.

A jar upon the other end of the bench awoke me from my reverie. A pale, neatly dressed, sad-looking young fellow had just sat down. He apologized for disturbing me, and the courtesy led to his moving up to my end.

"English?"

"No, from New York."

"What do you sell?"

"Nothing. I paint. This trap contains my canvas and colors. What do you do?" I asked.

"I am a clerk in the Department of Justice. The office is closed to-day, and I have come into the church out of the heat, because it is cool."

I sounded him carefully, was convinced

of his honesty, and related the incident of the confessional. He was not surprised. On the contrary, he recounted to me many similar instances in his own experience, explaining that it is quite natural for a man haunted by a crime to seek the quiet of a church, and that often the relief afforded by the confessional wrings from him his secret. No doubt my case was one of these.

"And is the murderer safe?"

"From the priest, yes. The police agents, however, always watch the churches."

While we were speaking an officer passed, bowed to my companion, retraced his steps, and said, "There has been an important arrest. You may perhaps be wanted."

I touched the speaker's arm. "Pardon me. Was it made near the cathedral?"

"Yes; outside the great door."

"What was the color of his cap?"

He turned sharply, looked at me searchingly, and said, lowering his voice, —

"Red."

A few days later I wandered into the market-place, in search of a subject. My difficulty was simply one of selection. I could have opened my easel at random and made half a dozen sketches without leaving my stool; but where there is so much wealth of material one is apt to be over-critical, and, being anxious to pick out the best, often loses the *esprit* of the first impression, and so goes away without a line. It was not the fault of the day or the market. The sun was brilliant beyond belief, the sky superb; the open square of the older section was filled with tumble-down bungalow-like sheds, hung with screens of patched matting; the side-walks were fringed with giant thatched umbrellas, picturesque in the extreme; the costumes were rich and varied: all this and more, and yet I was not satisfied. Outside the slanting roofs, heaped up on the pavement, lay piles of green vegetables, pottery, and fruit, glistening in the dazzling light. Inside the booths hung festoons of bright stuffs, rebozos and *pañuelos*, gray and cool by contrast. Thronging crowds of natives streamed in

and out the sheds, blocked up narrow passageways, grouped in the open, and disappeared into the black shadows of an inviting archway, beyond which an even crisper sunlight glowed in dabs, spots, and splashes of luxuriant color.

There was everything, in fact, to intoxicate a man in search of the picturesque, and yet I idled along without opening my sketch-book, and for more than an hour lugged my trap about: deciding on a group under the edge of the archway, with a glimpse of blue in the sky and the towers of the church beyond; abandoning that instantly for a long stretch of street lead-

ing out of a square dotted with donkeys waiting to be unloaded ; and concluding, finally, to paint some high-wheeled carts, only to relinquish them all for something else.

I continued, I say, to waste thus foolishly my precious time, until, dazed and worn out, I turned on my heel, hailed a cab, and drove to the old Paseo. There I entered the little *plazuela*, embowered in trees, sat down opposite the delightful old church of San Francisco, and was at work in five minutes. When one is dazzled by a sunset, let him shut his eyes. After the blaze of a Mexican market, try the quiet grays of a seventeenth-century church, seen through soft foliage and across cool, shady walks.

This church of San Francisco is another of the delightful old churches of Puebla. I regret that the fiend with the bucket and the flat brush has practically destroyed almost the whole interior except the choir, which is still exquisite with its finely carved wooden stalls and rich organ, — but I rejoice that the outside, with its quaint altar fronting on the *plazuela* fa-

çade of dark brick ornamented with panels of Spanish tiles, stone carvings, statues, and lofty towers, is still untouched, and hence beautiful.

Adjoining the church is a military hospital and barracks, formerly an old convent. I was so wholly wrapped up in my work that my water-cup needed refilling before I looked up and about me. To my surprise, I was nearly surrounded by a squad of soldiers and half a dozen officers. One fine-looking old fellow, with gray moustache and pointed beard, stood so close that my elbow struck his knee when I arose.

The first thought that ran through my head was my experience of Sunday, and my unpardonable imprudence in imparting my discoveries of the confessional to the sad-faced young man on the bench. Tracked, of course, I concluded, — arrested in the streets, and held as a witness on bread and pulque for a week. No passport, and an alibi out of the question! A second glance reassured me. The possessor of the pointed beard only smiled cordially, apologized, and seated

himself on the bench at my right. His intentions were the most peaceful. It was the growing picture that absorbed him and his fellow-officers and men. They had merely deployed noiselessly in my rear, to find out what the deuce the stranger was doing under that white umbrella. Only this, and nothing more.

I was not even permitted to fill my water-bottle. A sign from my friend, and a soldier, with his arm in a sling, ran to the fountain, returned in a flash, and passed the bottle back to me with so reverential an air that but for the deep earnestness of his manner I should have laughed aloud. He seemed to regard the water-bottle as the home of the witch that worked the spell.

After that the circle was narrowed, and my open cigarette-case added a touch of good fellowship, everybody becoming quite cozy and sociable. The officer was in command of the barracks. His brother officers — one after another was introduced with much form and manner — were on duty at the hospital except one, who was in command of the department of

police of the city. A slight chill ran down my spine, but I returned the commandant's bow with a smile that established at once the absolute purity of my life.

For two hours, in the cool of the morning, under the trees of the little *plazuela*, this charming episode continued; I painting, the others around me deeply interested; all smoking, and chatting in the friendliest possible way. At the sound of a bugle the men dropped away, and soon after all the officers bowed and disappeared, except my friend with the pointed beard and the commandant of the police. These two moved their bench nearer, and sat down, determined to watch the sketch to the end.

The conversation drifted into different channels. The system of policing the streets at night was explained to me, the manner of arrest, the absolute authority given to the *jefe politico* in the rural districts, — an execution first, and an investigation afterwards, — the necessity for such prompt action in a country abounding in bandits, the success of the government in suppressing the evil, etc.

"And are the crimes confined wholly to the country districts?" I asked. "Are your cities safe?"

"Generally, yes. Occasionally there is a murder among the lower classes of the people. It is not always for booty; revenge for some real or fancied injury often prompts it."

"Has there been any particularly brutal crime committed here lately?" I asked carelessly, skirting the edge of my precipice.

"Not exactly here. There was one at Atlixco, a small town a few miles west of here, but the man escaped."

"Have you captured him?"

"Not yet. There was a man arrested here a few days ago, who is now awaiting examination. It may be that we have the right one. We shall know to-morrow."

I kept at work, dabbing away at the mass of foliage, and putting in pats of shadow tones.

"Was it the man arrested near the cathedral on Palm Sunday?"

"There was a man arrested on Palm

Sunday," he replied slowly, "How did you know?"

I looked up, and found his eyes riveted on me in a peculiar, penetrating way.

"I heard it spoken of in the church," I replied, catching my breath. My foot went over the precipice. I could see into the pit below.

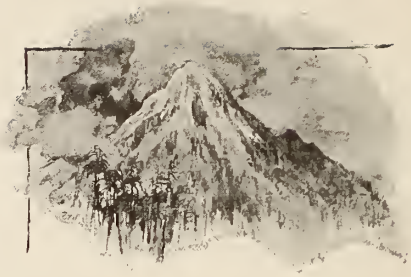
"If the American heard of it," said he in a low voice, turning to my friend, "it was badly done."

I filled a fresh brush with color, leaned over my canvas, and before I looked up a second time had regained my feet and crawled back to a safe spot. — I could hear the stones go rumbling down into the abyss beneath me. Then I concentrated myself upon the details of the façade, and the officer began explaining the early history of the founding of the church, and the many vicissitudes it had experienced in the great battles which had raged around its towers. By the time he had finished the cold look went out of his eyes.

The sketch was completed, the trap bundled up, three hats were raised, and we separated.

I thought of the horror-stricken face of the priest and the crouching figure of the Mexican; then I thought of that penetrating, steel-like glance of the commandant.

So far as I know the priest alone shares the secret.



CHAPTER IX.

A DAY IN TOLUCA.

HITHERTO my travels, with the exception of a divergence to Puebla, have been in a straight line south, beginning at the frontier town of El Paso, stopping at Zacatécas, Aguas Calientes, Silao, Guanajuato, and Querétaro, — all important cities on the line of the Mexican Central Railroad, — and ending at the city of Mexico, some twelve hundred miles nearer the equator.

It is true that I have made a flying trip over the Mexican Railway, passing under the shadow of snow-capped Orizaba, have

looked down into the deep gorges of the *Infiernillo* reeking with the hot humid air of the tropics, and have spent one night in the fever-haunted city of Vera Cruz; but my experiences were confined to such as could be enjoyed from the rear platform of a car, to a six by nine room in a stuffy hotel, and to a glimpse at night of the sea, impelled by a norther, rolling in from the Gulf and sousing the quay incumbered with surf boats. Had I been a bird belated in the autumn, I could have seen more.

This bright April morning I have shaken the dust of the great city from my feet, and have bent my steps westward towards the Pacific. In common parlance, I have bought a first-class ticket for as far as the national railroad will take me, and shall come bump up against the present terminus at Pátzcuaro.

On my way west I shall stop at Toluca, an important city some fifty miles down the road, tarry a while at Morelia, the most delightful of all the cities of western Mexico, and come to a halt at Pátzcuaro. In all some three hundred miles from where I sit in the station and look out my car

window. I am particular about these distances.

At Pátzcuaro I shall find a lake bearing the same name. Up this lake, nearly to the end, an Indian adobe village, at the end of the village a tumbling-down church and convent, within this convent a cloister, leading out of the cloister a narrow passage ending in a low-ceiled room with its one window protected by an iron grating. Through this fretwork of rusty iron the light streams in, falling, I am told, upon one of the priceless treasures of the world — an Entombment by Titian.

This, if you please, is why my course points due west.

The scenery along the line of the road from the City of Mexico to where the divide is crossed at *la Cima* — some ten thousand feet above the level of the sea, and thence down into the Toluca valley — was so inexpressibly grand that I was half the time in imminent danger of decorating a telegraph pole with my head, in my eagerness to enjoy it.

Great masonry dams hold back lakes

of silver shimmering in the sunlight; deep gorges lie bottomless in purple shadows; wide stretches of table-land end in volcanoes ragged, dead, and creviced with

snow; and sharp craggy peaks, tumbling waterfalls, and dense semi-tropical jungles start up and out and from under me at every curve.

On reaching the valley of Toluca, the road as it nears the red-tiled roofs of the city follows the windings of the river Lerma, its banks fringed with natives bathing. On reaching the city itself the clean,

well-dressed throng at the depot explains at a glance the value of this stream apart from its irrigating properties.

And the city is clean, with a certain well-planned, well-built, and orderly air about it, and quite a modern air too. Remembering a fine gray dust which seems to be a part of the very air one breathes, and the great stretches of gardens filled with trees, and the long drought continuing for months, I should say that the prevailing color of Toluca's vegetation is a light mullein-stalk green. Then the houses are a dusty pink, the roofs a dusty red, and the streets and sidewalks a dusty yellow, and the sky always and ever, from morn till night, a dusty blue. It is the kind of a place Cazin, the great French impressionist, would revel in. So subtle and exquisite are the grays and their harmonies that one false note from your palette sets your teeth on edge.

But Toluca is not by any means a modern city, despite its apparent newness, its air of prosperity, and its generally brushed-up appearance. It is one of the oldest of the Spanish settlements. No less a per-

sonage than the great Cortez himself received its site, and a comfortable slice of the surrounding country thrown in, as a present, from his king. In fact it is but a few years, not twenty, since the government pulled down the very house once occupied by the conqueror's son, Don Martin Cortez, and built upon its site the present imposing state buildings fronting the plaza *major*.

This pulling down and rebuilding process is quite fashionable in Toluca, and has extended even to its churches. The primitive church of San Francisco was replaced by a larger structure of stone in 1585, and this in turn by an important building erected in the seventeenth century; and yet these restless people, as if cramped for room, levelled this edifice to the ground in 1874 and started upon its ruins what purposes to be a magnificent temple, judging from the acres it covers. In fourteen years it has grown twelve feet high. Some time during the latter part of the next century they will be slating the roof.

Then there are delightful markets, and a fine bull-ring, and in the suburbs a pretty

alameda full of matted vines and overgrown walks, besides two gorgeous theatres. Altogether Toluca is quite worth dusting off to see, even if it does not look as old as the Pyramids or as dilapidated as an Arab town.

In all this newness there is one spot which refreshes you like a breeze from afar. It is the little chapel of Nuestra Señora del Carmen, laden with the quaintness, the charm, and the dust of the sixteenth century. It has apparently never yet occurred to any Tolucian to retouch it, and my only fear in calling attention to it now is, that during the next annual spring-cleaning the man with the bucket will smother its charm in whitewash.

It was high noon when I sallied out from my lodgings to look for this forgotten relic of the past. I had spent the morning with that ubiquitous scapegrace Moon, whom I had met in Zacatécas some weeks before and who had run up to Toluca on some business connected with the road. He nearly shook my arm off when he ran against me in the market, inquired after the chair, vowed I should not wet a

brush until I broke bread with him, and would have carried me off bodily to breakfast had I not convinced him that no man could eat two meals half an hour apart. He was delighted that I could find nothing, as he expressed it, "rickety" enough to paint in Toluca, and then relenting led me up to a crack in a crooked street, pointed ahead to the chapel, and deserted me with the remark: —

"Try that. It is as musty as a cheese, and about a million years old."

I passed through a gate, entered the sacred building, and wandered out into a patio or sort of cloister. Instantly the world and its hum was gone. It was a small cloister, square, paved with marble flags, and open to the blue sky above. Beneath the arches, against the wall, hung a few paintings, old and weather-stained. Opposite from where I stood was an open door. I crossed the quadrangle and entered a cozily furnished apartment. The ceiling was low and heavily beamed, the floor laid in brick tiles, and the walls faced with shelves loaded with books bound in vellum with titles labelled in ink.

Over the door was an unframed picture, evidently a Murillo, and against the opposite wall hung several large copies of Ribera. In one corner under a grated window rested an iron bedstead, — but recently occupied, — and near it an armchair with faded velvet cushions. A low table covered with books and manuscripts, together with a skull, candle, and rosary, a copper basin and pitcher, and a few chairs completed the interior comforts. Over the bed, within arm's reach, hung a low shelf upon which stood a small glass cup holding a withered rose. The cup was dry and the flower faded and dust covered.

A second and smaller room opened out to the left. I pushed aside the curtains and looked in. It was unoccupied like the first. As I turned hurriedly to leave the apartments my eye fell upon a copy of Medina's works bound in vellum, yellow and crinkled, the backs tied by a leathern string. I leaned forward to note the date. Suddenly the light was shut out, and from the obstructed doorway came a voice quick and sharp.

"What does the stranger want with the

padre's books?" I looked up and saw a man holding a bunch of keys. The situation was unpleasant. Without changing my position, I lifted the book from the shelf and carefully read the title-page.

"Will he be gone long?" I answered, slowly replacing the volume.

"You are waiting, then, for Fray Geronimo? Many pardons, señor, I am the sacristan. I will find the padre and bring him to you."

I sank into the armchair. Retreat now was impossible. This will do for the sacristan I thought, but how about the priest?

In a moment more I caught the sound of quickening footsteps crossing the patio. By the side of the sacristan stood a bareheaded young priest, dressed in a white robe which reached to his feet. He had deep-set eyes, which were intensely dark, and a skin of ivory whiteness. With a kindly smile upon his handsome intellectual face, he came forward and said: —

"Do you want me?"

I laid my course in an instant.

"Yes, holy father," I replied, rising, "to crave your forgiveness. I am an Ameri-

can and a painter; see, here is my sketch-book. I entered your open door, believing it would lead me to the street. The Murillo, the Riberas, the wonderful collection of old books, more precious than any I have ever seen in all Mexico, overcame me. I love these things, and could not resist the temptation of tarrying long enough to feast my eyes."

"*Mi amigo*, do not be disturbed. It is all right. You can go, Pedro," — this to the sacristan. "I love them too. Let us look them over together."

For more than an hour we examined the contents of the curious library. Almost without an exception each book was a rare volume. There were rows of ecclesiastical works in Latin with red lettered title-pages printed in Antwerp. Two editions of Don Quixote with copper plates, published in Madrid in 1760, besides a varied collection of the early Mexican writers including Alarcon, the dramatist, and Gongora, the poet-philosopher.

Then in the same gracious manner he mounted a chair and took from the wall the unframed Murillo, "A Flight into

Egypt," and placed it in the light, saying that it had formerly belonged to an ancestor and not to the church, and that believing it to be the genuine work of the great master, he had brought it with him when he came to Toluca, the face of the Madonna being especially dear to him. Next he unlocked a closet and brought me an ivory crucifix of exquisite workmanship, the modelling of the feet and hands recalling the best work of the Italian school. He did not return this to the closet, but placed it upon the little shelf over his bed close to the dry cup which held the withered rose. In the act the flower slipped from the glass. Noticing how carefully he moved the cup aside, and how tenderly he replaced the shrivelled bud, I said laughingly: —

"You not only love old books, but old flowers as well."

He looked at me thoughtfully, and replied gravely: —

"Some flowers are never old."

In the glare of the sunlight of the street I met Moon. He had been searching for me for an hour.

"Did you find that hole in the wall?" he called out. "Come over here where the wind can blow through you. You must feel like a grave-digger. Where is your sketch?"

I had no sketch and told him so. The interior was in truth delightfully picturesque, but the young priest was so charming that I had not even opened my trap.

"What sort of a looking priest?"

I described him as closely as I could.

"It sounds like Geronimo. Yes — same priest."

"Well — ?"

"Oh! the old story and a sad one. Gray dawn — muffled figures — obliging duenna — diligence — governor on horseback — girl locked up in a hacienda — student forced into the church. Queer things happen in Mexico, my boy, and *cruel* ones too."

CHAPTER X.

TO MORELIA WITH MOON.

Moon insists on going to Morelia with me. He has a number of reasons for this sudden resolve: that the señoritas are especially charming and it is dangerous for me to go alone; that he knows the sacristan *major* of the cathedral and can buy for me for a song the entire movable property of the church; that there is a lovely alameda overgrown with wild roses, and that it is so tangled up and crooked I will lose the best part of it if he does

not pilot me about; and finally, when I demur, that he has received a dispatch from his chief to meet him in Morelia on the morrow, and he must go anyhow.

He appears the next morning in a brown linen suit, with the same old sombrero slanted over one eye, and the loose end of his necktie tossed over his shoulder. On the way to the station he holds a dozen interviews with citizens occupying balconies along the route. He generally conducts these from the middle of the street, pitching his voice to suit the elevation. Then he deflects to the sidewalk, runs his head into the door of a posada, wakes up the inmates with a volley of salutations, bobs out again, hails by name the driver of a tram, and when he comes to a standstill calls out that he has changed his mind and will walk, and so arrives at the station bubbling over with good humor, and as restless as a schoolboy.

I cannot help liking this breezy fellow despite his piratical air, his avowed contempt for all the laws that govern well-regulated society, and his professed unbelief in the sincerity of everybody's motives.

His acquaintance is marvellous. He knows everybody, from the water-carrier to the archbishop. He speaks not only Spanish but half a dozen native dialects picked up from the Indians while he was constructing the railroad. He has lived in every town and village on the line; knows Morelia, Pátzcuaro, Tzintzúntzan, and the lake as thoroughly as he does his own abiding-place at Zacatécas; is perfectly familiar with all the mountain trails and short cuts across plains and foothills; is a born tramp, the best of Bohemians, and the most entertaining travelling companion possible.

His baggage is exceedingly limited. It consists of a tooth-brush, two collars, and a bundle of cigars. He replies to my remarks on its compactness, that "anybody's shirts fit him, and that he has plenty of friends up the road." And yet with all this there is something about the fearless way in which he looks you straight in the eye, and something about the firm lines around his mouth, that, in spite of his devil-may-care recklessness, convinces you of his courage and sincerity.

"Crawl over here," he breaks out from the end of the car, "and see this hacienda. Every square acre you see, including that range of mountains, belongs to one Mexican. It covers exactly one hundred and twenty square miles. The famished pauper who owns it has taken five millions of dollars from it during the last fifteen years. For the next eighteen miles you will ride through his land."

"Does he live here?" I inquired.

"No, he knows better. He lives in Paris like a lord, and spends every cent of it."

We were entering the lake country, and caught glimpses of Cuitzo shimmering through the hills.

"These shores are alive with wild fowl," continued Moon; "there goes a flight of storks now. You can bag a pelican and half a dozen flamingoes any morning along here before breakfast. But you should see the Indians hunt. They never use a gun when they go ducking. They tie a sharp knife to a long pole and spear the birds as they fly over. When they fish they strew green boughs along the

water's edge, and when the fish seek the shade, scoop them up with a dip net made from the fibre of the pulque plant. This country has changed but little since that old pirate Cortez took possession of it, as far as the Indians go. Many of them cannot understand a word of Spanish now, and I had to pick up their jargon myself, when I was here."

"Hello, Goggles!" he shouted out, suddenly jumping from his seat as the train stopped. I looked out and saw a poor blind beggar, guided by a boy with a stick.

"I thought you were dead long ago."

In a moment more he was out of the train and had the old man by the hand. When he turned away, I could see by the way the blind face lighted up that he had made him the richer in some way. The boy too seemed overjoyed, and would have left his helpless charge in the pushing crowd but for Moon, who snatched away the leading stick, and placed it in the beggar's hand again. Then he fell to berating the boy for his carelessness, without, however, diminishing in the least the

latter's good humor, raising his voice until the car windows were filled with heads.

All this in a dialect that was wholly unintelligible.

"You know the beggar," I remarked.

"Of course. Old Tizapan. Lost his eyes digging in a silver mine. That little devil is his grandson. If I had my way I would dig a hole and fill it up with these cripples."

When we reached Morelia it was quite dark, and yet it was difficult to get Moon out of the station, so many people had a word to say to him. When we arrived at the hotel fronting the plaza he was equally welcome, everybody greeting him.

It was especially delightful to see the landlord. He first fell upon his neck and embraced him, then stood off at a distance and admired him with his arms akimbo, drinking in every word of Moon's raillery. At the bare mention of dinner, he rushed off and brought in the cook whom Moon addressed instantly as Griddles, running from Spanish into English and French, and back again into Spanish, in the most surprising way.

"We will have a Mexican dinner for the painter, Griddles! No *bon bouche*, but a square meal, *un buena comida! magnifica!* especially some little fish baked in corn husks, peppers stuffed with tomatoes with plenty of *chile*, an onion salad with garlic, stewed figs, and a cup of Uruápam coffee, — the finest in the world," — this last to me.

Later all these were duly served and deliciously cooked, and opened my eyes to the resources of a Mexican kitchen when ordered by an expert.

In the morning Moon started for his friend the sacristan. He found him up a long flight of stone steps in one end of the cathedral. But he was helpless, even for Moon. We must find Padre Bailo, who lived near the Zocolo. He had the keys and charge of all the wornout church property. Another long search across plazas and in and out of market stalls, and Padre Bailo was encountered leaving his house on his way back to the cathedral. But it was impossible. *Mañana por la mañana*, or perhaps next week, but not to-day. Moon took the dried-up old

fossil aside, and brought him back in five minutes smiling all over with a promise to unlock everything on my return from Pátzcuaro.

"Now for the alameda. It is the most delightful old tangle in Mexico: rose-trees as high as a house; by-paths overgrown with vines and lost in beds of violets; stone benches galore; through the centre an aqueduct so light it might be built of looped ribbons; and such señoritas! I met a girl under one of those arches who would have taken your breath away. She had a pair of eyes, and a foot, and" —

"Never mind what the girl had, Moon. We may find her yet on one of the benches and I will judge for myself. Show me the alameda."

"Come on, then."

At the end of a beautiful street nearly half a mile long, — in reality a raised stone causeway with stone parapets and stone benches on either side, and shaded its entire length by a double row of magnificent elms, — I found the abandoned Paseo de las Lechugas (the street of the Lettuces).

Moon had not exaggerated the charm of its surroundings. Acacias and elms interlaced their branches across the walks, roses ran riot over the stone benches, twisted their stems in and out of the railings, and tossed their blossoms away up in the branches of the great trees. High up against the blue, the graceful aqueduct stepped along on his slender legs trampling the high grass, and through and into and over all, the afternoon sun poured its flood of gold.

The very unkempt deserted air of the place added to its beauty. It looked as if the forces of nature, no longer checked, had held high revel, and in their glee had well-nigh effaced all trace of closely cropped hedge, rectangular flower-bed, and fantastic shrub. The very poppies had wandered from their beds and stared at me from the roadside with brazen faces, and the once dignified tiger-lilies had turned tramps and sat astride of the crumbling curbs, nodding gayly at me as I passed.

"Did I not tell you?" broke out Moon. "How would you like to be lost in a tan-

gle like this for a month with a Fatinitza all eyes and perfume, with little Hottentots to serve you ices, and fan you with peacock tails?"

I admitted my inability to offer any valid objection to any such delicious experience, and intimated that, but for one obstacle, he could bring on his Hottentots and trimmings at once — I was *en route* for Pátzcuaro, Tzintzúntzan, and the Titian.

This was news to Moon. He had expected Pátzcuaro, that being the terminus of the greatest railroad of the continent, — P. Moon, Civil Engineer, — but what any sane man wanted to wander around looking for a dirty adobe Indian village like Tzintzúntzan, away up a lake, with nothing but a dug-out to paddle there in, and not a place to put your head in after you landed, was a mystery to him. Besides, who said there was any Titian? At all events, I might stay in Morelia until I could find my way around alone. The Titian had already hung there three hundred years, he thought it would hold out for a day or two longer.

So we continued rambling about this most delightful of all the Mexican cities; across the plaza of La Paz at night; sitting under the trees listening to the music, and watching the love-making on the benches; in the cathedral at early mass, stopping for fruit and a cup of coffee at the market on the way; through the college of San Nicholas where Fray Geronimo had studied; to the governor's house to listen to a concert and to present ourselves to his excellency, who had sent for us; to the great pawn-shop, the Monte de Piedad, on the regular day of sale, and to the thousand and one delights of this *dolce far niente* city; returning always at sundown to the inn, to be welcomed by the landlord, who shouted for Griddles the moment he laid eyes on Moon, and began spreading the cloth on the little table under the fig-tree in the garden.

After this Bohemian existence had lasted for several days I suddenly remembered that Moon had not been out of my sight five waking minutes; and being anxious for his welfare, I ventured to jog his memory.

"Moon, did you not tell me that you came here on orders from your chief, who wanted you on urgent business and was waiting for you?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen him?"

"No."

"Heard from him?"

"No."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Let him wait."

CHAPTER XI.

PÁTZCUARO AND THE LAKE.

When I rapped at Moon's door the next morning he refused to open it. He apologized for this refusal by roaring through the transom that the thought of my leaving him alone in Morelia had caused him a sleepless night, and that he had determined never to look upon my face again; that he had "never loved a dear gazelle," etc., — this last sung in a high key; that he was not coming out; and that I might go to Pátzcuaro and be hanged to me.

So the landlord and Griddles escorted

me to the station, the *chef* carrying my traps, and the landlord a mysterious basket with a suggestive bulge in one corner of the paper covering. As the train moved slowly out, this basket was passed through the window with a remark that Mr. Moon had prepared it the night before, with especial instructions not to deliver it until I was under way. On removing the covering the bulge proved to be glass, with a tin foil covering the cork, on top of which was a card bearing the superscription of my friend, with a line stating that "charity of the commonest kind had influenced him in this attempt to keep me from starving during my idiotic search for the Titian, that the dulces beneath were the pride of Morelia, the fruit quite fresh, and the substratum of sandwiches the best Griddles could make."

I thanked the cheery fellow in my heart, forgave him his eccentricities, and wondered whether I should ever see his like again.

An hour later I had finished the customary inventory of the car: the padre

very moist and very dusty as if he had reached the station from afar, mule-back; the young Hidalgo with buckskin jacket, red sash, open slashed buckskin breeches with silver buttons of bulls' heads down the seam, wide sombrero, and the ivory handle of a revolver protruding from his hip pocket; the two demure señoritas dressed in black with veils covering their heads and shoulders, attended by the stout duenna on the adjoining seat with fat pudgy hands, hoop earrings, and restless eyes; the old Mexican, thin, yellow, and dried up, with a cigarette glued to his lower lip.

I had looked them all over carefully, speculating as one does over their several occupations and antecedents, and feeling the loss of my encyclopædic friend in unravelling their several conditions, when the door of the car immediately in front of me opened, and that ubiquitous individual himself slowly sauntered in, his cravat flying, and his big sombrero flattened against the back of his head. The only change in his costume had been the replacing of his brown linen suit with one

of a fine blue check, newly washed and ironed in streaks. From his vest pocket protruded his customary baggage, — the ivory handle and the points of two cigars.

"Why, Moon!" I blurted out, completely surprised. "Where did you come from?"

"Baggage car — had a nap. Got the basket, I see."

"I left you in bed," I continued.

"You did n't. Was shivering on the outside waiting for the landlord's clothes. How do they fit? Left mine to be washed."

"Where are you going?" I insisted, determined not to be side-tracked.

"To Pátzcuaro." Then with a merry twinkle in his eye he leaned forward, canted his sombrero over his left eye, and shading his mouth with its brim whispered confidentially, "You see, I got a dispatch from my chief to meet him in Pátzcuaro, and I managed by hurrying a little to catch this train."

Pátzcuaro lies on a high hill overlooking the lake. The beautiful sheet of water at its foot, some twenty miles long

and ten wide, is surrounded by forest-clad hills and studded with islands, and peopled almost exclusively by Indians, who support themselves by fishing.

The town is built upon hilly broken ground, the streets are narrow and crooked, and thoroughly Moorish in their character, and the general effect picturesque in the extreme.

On alighting from the train it was evident that the progressiveness of the nineteenth century ended at the station. Drawn up in the road stood a lumbering stage-coach and five horses. It was as large as a country barn, and had enormous wheels bound with iron and as heavy as an artillery wagon's. In front, there hung a boot made of leather an inch thick, with a multitude of straps and buckles. Behind, a similar boot, with more straps and buckles. On top was fastened an iron railing, protecting an immense load of miscellaneous freight. There was also a flight of steps that let down in sections, with a hand-rail to assist the passenger. Within and without, on cushions, sides, curtains, over top, bag-

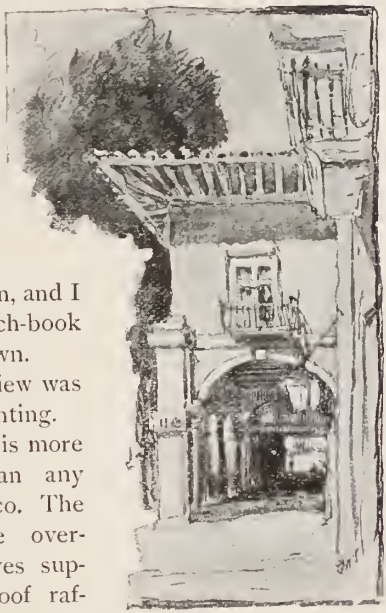
gage, wheels, driver, horses, and harness the gray dust lay in layers, — not sifted over it, but piled up in heaps.

The closest scrutiny on my companion's part failed to reveal the existence of anything resembling a spring made either of leather, rawhide, or steel. This last was a disappointment to Moon, who said that occasionally some coaches were built that way.

But two passengers entered it, — Moon and I; the others, not being strangers, walked. The distance to the town from the station is some two miles, up hill. It was not until my trap rose from the floor, took a flying leap across the middle of the seat, and landed edgewise below Moon's breastbone, that I began to fully realize how badly the authorities had neglected the highway. Moon coincided, remarking that they had evidently blasted it out in the rough, but the pieces had not been gathered up.

We arrived first, entering the arcade of the Fonda Concordia afoot, the coach lumbering along later minus half its top freight.

A cup of coffee, — none better than this native coffee, — an omelet with peppers, and some fruit, and Moon started out to make arrangements for my trip up the lake to Tzintzúntzan and the Titian, and I with my sketch-book to see the town.



A closer view was not disappointing.

Pátzcuaro is more Moorish than any city in Mexico. The houses have overhanging eaves supported by roof rafters similar to those seen in southern Spain. The verandas are shaded by awnings and choked up with flowers. The arcades are flanked by

slender Moorish columns, the streets are crossed by swinging lanterns stretched from house to house by iron chains, the windows and doorways are surmounted by the horseshoe arch of the Alhambra, and the whole place inside and out reminds you of Toledo transplanted. Although seven thousand feet above the level of the sea, it is so near the edge of the slope running down into the hot country that its market is filled with tropical fruits unknown on the plateau of Mexico farther east, and the streets thronged with natives dressed in costumes never met with in high latitudes.

Tradition has it that in the days of the good Bishop Quiroga, when the See of Michoacan was removed hither from Tzintzúntzan, Pátzcuaro gave promise of being an important city, as is proved by the unfinished cathedral. When, however, the See was again removed to Morelia the town rapidly declined, until to-day it is the least important of the old cities of Michoacan. The plaza is trodden down and surrounded by market stalls, the churches are either abandoned or, what is worse, reno-

vated, and there is nothing left of interest to the idler and antiquary, outside of the charm of its picturesque streets and location, except it may be the tomb of the great bishop himself, who lies buried under the altar of the Jesuit church, the Campañia, — his bones wrapped in silk.

I made some memoranda in my sketch-book, bought some coffee, lacquer ware, and feather work, and returned to the inn to look for Moon. He was sitting under the arcade, his feet against the column and his chair tilted back, smoking. He began as soon as I came within range: —

"Yes, know all about it. You can go there three ways: over the back of a donkey, aboard an Indian canoe, or swim."

"How far is it?"

"Fifteen miles."

The Titian looked smaller and less important than at any time since my leaving the city of Mexico.

"What do you suggest?"

"I am not suggesting, I 'm a passenger."

"You going?"

"Of course. Think I would leave you

here to be murdered by these devils for your watch key?"

The picture loomed up once more.

"Then we will take the canoe."

"Next week you will, not now. Listen. Yesterday was market day; market day comes but once a week. There are no canoes on the beach below us from as far up the lake as Tzintzúntzan, and the fishermen from Zanicho and towns nearer by refuse to paddle so far."

He threw away his cigar, elongated himself a foot or more, broke out into a laugh at my discomfiture, slipped his arm through mine, and remarked apologetically "that he had sent for a man and had an idea."

In half an hour the man arrived, and with him the information that some employees of the road had recently constructed from two Indian dug-out canoes a sort of catamaran; that a deck had been floored between, a mast stepped, and a sail rigged thereon. The craft awaited our pleasure.

Moon's idea oozed out in driblets. Fully developed, it recommended the im-

mediate stocking of the ship with provisions, the hiring of six Indians with sweep oars, and a start bright and early on the morrow for Tzintzúntzan; Moon to be commodore and hold the tiller; I to have

the captain's stateroom, with free use of the deck.

The morning dawned deliciously cool and bright. Moon followed half an hour later, embodying all the characteristics of the morning and supplementing a few of his own, — another suit of clothes, a cloth cap, and an enormous spyglass.

The clothes were the result of a further exchange of courtesies with a brother engineer, the cap replaced his time-worn broad sombrero, "out of courtesy to the sail," he said, and the spyglass would be useful either as a club of defence, or to pole over shoal places, or in examining the details of the Titian. "It might be hung high, and he wanted to see it."

These explanations, however, were cut short by the final preparations for the start, — Moon giving orders in true nautical style, making fast the rudder, calling all hands aft to stow the various baskets and hampers, battening down the trap door hatches, and getting everything snug and trim for a voyage of discovery as absurd to him as if entered upon for the finding of the Holy Grail.

Finally all was ready, Moon seized the tiller, and gave the order to cast off. A faint cheer went up from the group of natives on the shore, the wind gave a kindly puff, the six Indians, stripped to their waists, bent to their oars, and the catamaran drifted clear of the gravel beach, and bore away up the lake to Tzintzúntzan.

She was certainly as queer a looking craft as ever trailed a rudder. To be exact, she was about thirty feet long, half as wide, and drew a hand's-breadth of water. Her bow flooring was slightly trimmed to a point; her square stern was protected by a bench a foot wide and high, — forming a sort of open locker under which a man could crawl and escape the sun; her deck was flat, and broken only by the mast, which was well forward, and the rests or giant oarlocks which held the sweeps. The rudder was a curiosity. It was half as long as the boat, and hung over the stern like the pole of an old-fashioned well-sweep. When fulfilling its destiny it had as free charge of the deck as the boom of a fishing smack in a gale of wind. Another peculiarity of the rudder was its independent action. It not only had ideas of its own but followed them. The skipper followed too after a brief struggle, and walked miles across the deck in humoring its whims. The sail was unique. It was made of a tarpaulin which had seen better days as the fly of a camping tent, and was nailed flat to

the short boom which wandered up and down the rude mast at will, assisted by half a dozen barrel hoops and the iron tire of a wheelbarrow. Two trap doors, cut midway the deck, led into the bowels of the dug-outs, and proved useful in bailing out leakage and overwash.

As I was only cabin passenger and so without responsibility, I stretched my length along the bench and watched Moon handle the ship. At first all went smoothly, the commodore grasped the tiller as cordially as if it had been the hand of his dearest friend, and the wilful rudder, lulled to sleep by the outburst, swayed obediently back and forth. The tarpaulin, meanwhile, bursting with the pride of its promotion, bent to the breeze in an honest effort to do its share. Suddenly the wind changed; the inflated sail lost its head and clung wildly to the mast, the catamaran careened, Moon gave a vicious jerk, and the rudder awoke. Then followed a series of misunderstandings between the commodore and the thoroughly aroused well-sweep which enlivened all the dull passages of the voyage, and in-

troduced into the general conversation every variety of imprecation known to me in languages with which I am familiar, assisted and enlarged by several dialects understood and appreciated only by the six silent, patient men keeping up their rhythmic movement at the sweeps.

When we reached the first headland on our weather bow the wind freshened to a stiff breeze, and after a brief struggle Moon decided to go about. I saw at a glance that the catamaran held different views, and that it was encouraged and "egged" on, so to speak, by its co-conspirator the rudder.

"You men on the right, stop rowing."

This order was emphasized by an empty bottle thrown from the locker. The three Indians stood motionless.

"Haul that boom," — this to me, sketching with my feet over the stern.

I obeyed with the agility of a man-o'-war's man. The sail flapped wildly, the rudder gave a staggering lurch, and Moon measured his length on the deck!

By the time the commodore had regained his feet he had exhausted his vo-

cabulary. Then with teeth hard set he lashed the rebellious rudder fast to the locker, furled the crestfallen sail, and resigned the boat to the native crew. Five minutes later he was stretched flat on the deck, bubbling over with good humor, and gloating over the contents of the hampers piled up around him.

"That town over your shoulder on the right is Xanicho," he rattled on, pointing with his fork to some adobe huts clustered around a quaint church spire.

"If we had time and a fair wind, I should like to show you the interior. It is exactly as the Jesuits left it three hundred years ago. Away over there on the right is Xarácuaro. You can see from here the ruins of the convent and of half a dozen brown hovels. Nobody there now but fishermen. The only white man in the village is the priest, and I would not wager to his being so all the way through. A little farther along, over that island, if you look close you can see a small town; it is Igúatzio. There are important Aztecs remains about it. A paved roadway leads to the adjoining village, which was

built long before the coming of the Spaniards. I do not believe all the marvellous stories told of the Aztec sacrifices, but over the hill yonder is the ruins of the only genuine Teocalli, if there ever was such a thing, in Mexico. I have made a study of these so-called Aztec monuments and have examined most of the Teocallis or sacrificial mounds of Montezuma's people without weakening much my unbelief, but I confess this one puzzles me. One day last winter I heard the Indians talking about this mound, and two of us paddled over. It lies in a hollow of the hills back of the town, and is inclosed by a stone wall about one thousand feet long, eight feet high, and four feet wide. The Teocalli itself stands in the middle of this quadrangle. It is constructed in the form of a truncated cone about one hundred feet square at the base and nearly as high, built entirely of stone, with an outside stairway winding around its four sides. On one corner of the top are the remains of a small temple. I do not think half a hundred people outside the natives have ever

seen it. If it is not a Teocalli there is not one in all Mexico. The fact is, no other Aztec mound in Mexico is worthy of the name, — not even Cholula."

Suddenly a low point, until now hidden by an intervening headland, pushed itself into the lake. Moon reached for his spy-glass and adjusted the sliding tube.

"Do you see those two white specks over that flat shore?"

"Perfectly."

"And the clump of dark trees surrounding it?"

"Yes."

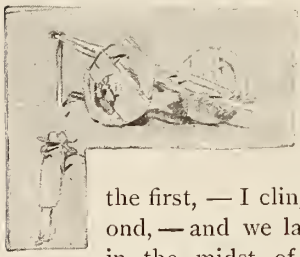
"Well, that is Tzintzúntzan. The big speck is what is left of the old Franciscan convent, the clump of trees is the olive orchard, the ancient burial-place of the Aztecs. The little speck is the top of the dome of the convent chapel, beneath which hangs your daub of a Titian."

CHAPTER XII.

TZINTZÚNTZAN AND THE TITIAN.

THE catamaran rounded the point, floated slowly up to the beach, and anchored on a shoal within a boat's-length of the shore. Strung along the water's edge, with wonder-stricken faces, were gathered half of the entire population of Tzintzúntzan. The other half were coming at full speed over the crest of the hill, which partly hid the village itself.

There being but two feet of water, and those wet ones, Moon shot an order in an unknown tongue into the group in front,



starting two of them forward, swung himself gracefully over the shoulders of the first, — I clinging to the second, — and we landed dry shod in the midst of as curious a crowd of natives as ever greeted the great Christopher himself.

The splendor which made Tzintzúntzan famous in the days of the good Bishop Quiroga, when its population numbered forty thousand souls, has long since departed. The streets run at right angles, and are divided into squares of apparently equal length, marking a city of some importance in its day. High walls surround each garden and cast grateful shadows. Many of these are broken by great fissures through which can be seen the ruins of abandoned tenements overgrown with weeds and tangled vines. Along the tops of these walls fat melons ripen in the dazzling sun, their leaves and tendrils white with dust, and from the many seams

and cracks the cacti flaunt their deep-red blossoms in your face.

We took the path starting from the beach, which widened into a broad road as it crossed the hill, over which could be seen the white spire of the church. This was beaten down by many feet, and marked the daily life of the natives — from the church to pray, to the shore to fish. With the exception of shaping some crude pottery, they literally do nothing else.

As we advanced along this highway, — Moon carrying his spy-glass as an Irishman would his hod over his shoulder, I my umbrella, and the Indians my sketch trap and a basket containing something for the padre, — the wall thickened and grew in height until it ended in a cross wall, behind which stood the ruins of a belfry, the broken bell still clinging to the rotting roof timber. Adjoining this was a crumbling archway without door or hinge.

This forlorn entrance opened into the grounds of the once powerful establishment of San Francisco, closed and in ruins since 1740. Beyond this archway stood another, protected by a heavy double

iron grating, which once swung wide to let pass the splendid pageants of the time, now rust-incrusted, and half buried in the ground.

Once inside, the transition was delightful. There was a great garden or orchard planted with olive trees of enormous size, their tops still alive, and their trunks seamed and gnarled with the storms of three and a half centuries, beneath which lie buried not only the great dignitaries of the Church, but many of the allies and chiefs of Cortez in the times of the Tarascan chieftancy.

On one side of this orchard is the chapel of the Tercer Order and the Hospital and the convent church, now the

parróquia. We crossed between the trees and waited outside the convent building at the foot of a flight of stone steps, built along an angle of a projection and leading to the second floor of the building. These steps were crowded with Indians, as was also the passageway within, waiting for an audience with the parish priest, whose apartments were above.

Nothing can adequately describe the dilapidation of this entrance and its surroundings. The steps themselves had been smeared over with mortar to hold them together, the door jambs were leaning and ready to fall, the passageway itself ended in a window which might once have held exquisite panels of stained glass, but which was now open to the elements save where it was choked up with adobe bricks laid loosely in courses. The rooms opening into it were tenantless, and infested with lizards and bats, and the whole place inside and out was fast succumbing to a decay which seemed to have reached its limit, and which must soon end in hopeless ruin.

We found the padre seated at a rude

table in the darkest corner of a low-ceiled room on the left of the corridor, surrounded by half a dozen Indian women. He was at dinner, and the women were serving him from coarse earthen dishes. When he turned at our intrusion, we saw a short, thickset man, wearing a greasy black frock, a beard a week old, and a smile so treacherous that I involuntarily tapped my inside pocket to make sure of its contents. He arose lazily, gathered upon his coat cuff the few stray crumbs clinging to his lips, and with a searching, cunning air, asked our business.

Moon shifted his spy-glass until the large end was well balanced in his hand, and replied obsequiously, "To see the famous picture, holy father. This, my

companion, is a distinguished painter from the far East. He has heard of the glory of this great work of the master, of which you are the sacred custodian, and has come these many thousand miles to see it. I hope your reverence will not turn us away."

I saw instantly from his face that he had anticipated this, and that his temper was not improved by Moon's request. I learned afterwards that a canoe had left Pátzcuaro ahead of the catamaran, and that the object of our visit had already been known in Tzintzúntzan some hours before we arrived.

"It is a holy day," replied the padre curtly, "and the sacristy is closed. The picture will not be uncovered."

With this he turned his back upon us and resumed his seat.

I looked at Moon. He was sliding his hand nervously up and down the glass, and clutching its end very much as a man would an Indian club.

"Leave him to me," he whispered from behind his hand, noticing my disappointment; "I'll get into that sacristy, if

I have to bat him through the door with this."

In the hamper which Moon had instructed Griddles the *chef* to pack for my comfort the day before at Morelia, was a small glass vessel, flat in shape, its contents repressed by a cork covered with tinfoil. When Moon landed from the catamaran this vessel was concealed among some boxes of dulces and fruits from the southern slope, inclosed in a wicker basket, and intrusted to an Indian who now stood within three feet of the table.

"You are right, holy father," said Moon, bowing low. "We must respect these holy days. I have brought your reverence some delicacies, and when the fast is over, you can enjoy them."

Then he piled up in the midst of the rude earthen platters and clay cups and bowls, — greasy with the remnants of the meal, — some bunches of grapes, squares of dulces, and a small bag of coffee. The flat vessel came last; this Moon handled lovingly, and with the greatest care, resting it finally against a pulque pot which the padre had just emptied.

The priest leaned forward, held the flat vessel between his nose and the window, ran his eyes along the flow line, and glancing at the women turned a dish over it bottom side up.

"When do you return?" he asked.

"To-day, your reverence."

There was a pause, during which the padre buried his face in his hands and Moon played pantomime war dance over the shaved spot on his skull.

"How much will the painter give to the poor of the parish?" said the padre, lifting his head.

After an exposition of the dismal poverty into which the painter was plunged by reason of his calling, it was agreed that upon the payment to the padre of *cinco pesos* in silver — about one pound sterling — the painter might see the picture, when mass was over, the padre adding, —

"There is presently a service. In an hour it will be over, then the sacristan can open the door."

Moon counted out the money on the table, piece by piece. The padre weighed each coin on his palm, bit one of them,

and with a satisfied air swept the whole into his pocket.

The tolling of a bell hurried the women from the room. The padre followed slowly, bowing his head upon his breast. Moon and I brought up the rear, passing down the crumbling corridor over the uneven flooring and upturned and broken tiles and through a low archway until we reached a gallery overlooking a patio. Here was a sight one must come to Mexico to see. Flat on the stone pavements, seated upon mats woven of green rushes, knelt a score or more of Indian women, their cheeks hollow from fasting, and their eyes glistening with that strange glassy look peculiar to half-starved people. Over their shoulders were twisted black rebozos, and around each head was bound a veritable crown of thorns. In their hands they held a scourge of platted nettles. They had sat here day and night without leaving these mats for nearly a week.

This terrible ceremony occurs but once a year, during passion week. The penance lasts eight days. Each penitent pays a sum of money for the privilege, and her

name and number is then inscribed upon a sort of tally-board which is hung on the cloister wall. Upon this is also kept a record of the punishment. The penitents provide their zarapes and pillows and the rush mats upon which to rest their weary bones; the priest furnishes everything else, — a little greasy gruel and the stone pavement.

The padre threaded his way through the kneeling groups without turning his head to the right or left. When his footsteps were heard they repeated their prayers the louder, and one young girl, weak from long fasting, raised her eyes to the priest's pleadingly. His stolid face gave no sign. With downcast eyes she leaned forward, bent low, and kissed the hem of his frock. As she stooped Moon pointed to the marks of the cruel thorns on her temples.

"Shall I maul him a little?" he whispered, twisting the glass uneasily.

"Wait until we see the Titian," I pleaded.

The cloister led into the chapel. It was bare of even the semblance of a house of worship. But for the altar in

one end, and the few lighted candles, it might have passed for the old refectory of the convent. We edged our way between the kneeling groups and passed out of a side door into an open court. Moon touched my arm.

"See! that about measures the poverty of the place, he said. One coffin for the whole village."

On a rude bier lay a wooden box, narrowed at one end. It was made of white wood, decorated on the outside with a rough design in blue and yellow. The bottom was covered with dried leaves, and the imprint of the head and shoulders of the poor fellow who had occupied it a few hours before was still distinct.

"Two underneath, one inside, a mumbled prayer, then he helps to fill the hole and they save the box for the next. A little too narrow for the padre, I am afraid," soliloquized Moon, measuring the width with his eye.

Another tap of the bell, and the Indians straggled out of the church and dispersed, some going to the village, others halting under the great tree trunks, watching us

curiously. Indeed, I had before this become aware of an especial espionage over us, which was never relaxed for a single instant. A native would start out from a doorway as soon as we touched the threshold, another would be concealed behind a tree or projecting wall until we passed. Then he would walk away aimlessly, looking back and signalling to another hidden somewhere else. This is not unusual with these natives. They have always resented every overture to part with their picture, and are particularly suspicious of strangers who come from a distance to see it, they worshipping it with a blind idolatry easily understood in their race.

This fear of invasion also extends to their village and church. It has been known for several years that an underground passageway led from a point near the church to the old convent, and in 1855 a party of *savants*, under the direction of Father Aguirre, began to uncover its entrance. No open resistance was made by the natives, but in the silence of the night each stone and shovelful of earth was noiselessly replaced.

A few years later the Bishop of Mexico offered for this picture the sum of twenty thousand pesetas, a sum of money fabulous in their eyes, and which if honestly divided would have made each native richer than an Aztec prince. I do not know whether their religious prejudices influenced them, or whether, remembering the quality of the penance gruel, they dare not trust the padre to divide it, but all the same it was refused. Moon assured me that if the painting ever left its resting place it must go without warning, and be protected by an armed force. It would be certain death to any one to attempt its removal otherwise, and he firmly believed that sooner than see it leave their village the Indians would destroy it.

"Señor, the padre says come to him."

The messenger was a sun-dried, shrivelled Mexican half-breed, with a wicked eye and a beak-like nose. About his head was twisted a red handkerchief, over which was flattened a heavy felt sombrero. He was barefooted, and his trousers were held up by a leather strap.

"Who are you?" said Moon.

"I am the sacristan."

"I thought so. Lead on. A lovely pair of cherubs, are they not?"

The padre met us at the door. He had sad news for us; his mortification was extreme. The man who cleaned the sacristy had locked the door that morning and started for Quiroga on a donkey. No one else had a key.

I suggested an immediate chartering of another, and somewhat livelier donkey, with instructions to overtake and bring back the man with the key, dead or alive. The padre shrugged his shoulders, and said there was but one donkey in the village, — he was underneath the man with the key. Moon closed one eye and turned the other incredulously on the priest.

"When will the man return?"

"In three days."

"Your reverence," said the commodore slowly, "do not send for him. It might annoy him to be hurried. We will break in the door and pay for a new lock."

Then followed a series of protests, beginning with the sacrilege of mutilating so

sacred a door, and ending with a suggestion from the saffron-colored sacristan that an additional *cinco pesos* would about cover the mutilation, provided every centavo of it was given to the poor of the

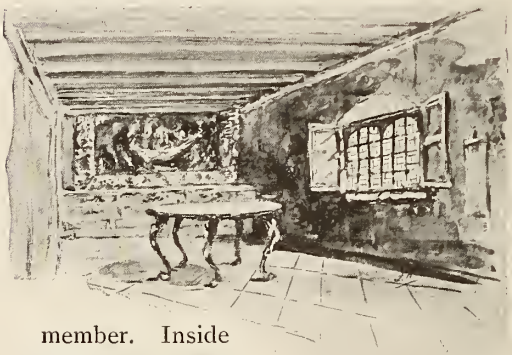
parish, and that the further insignificant sum of five pesetas, if donated to the especial use of his sun-dried excellency, might induce him to revive one of his lost arts, and operate on the lock with a rusty nail.

Moon counted out the money with a suppressed sigh, remarking that he had "always pitied the poor, but never so much as now." Then we followed the

padre and the sacristan down the winding steps leading to the cloister, through the dark corridor, past the entrance to the chapel, and halted at an arch closed by two swinging doors. His yellowness fumbled among some refuse in one corner, picked up a bit of débris, applied his eyes to an imaginary keyhole, and pushed open a pair of wooden doors entirely bare of lock, hasp, or latch. They had doubtless swung loose for half a century! I had to slip my arm through Moon's and pin his toes to the pavement to keep him still.

The padre and the half-breed uncovered and dropped upon their knees. I looked over their heads into a room about thirty feet long by twenty wide, with a high ceiling of straight square rafters. The floor was paved in great squares of marble laid diagonally, the walls were seamed, cracked, and weather-stained. The only opening other than the door was a large window, protected on the outside by three sets of iron gratings, and on the inside by double wooden shutters. The window was without glass. The only articles of furniture visible were a round ta-

ble with curved legs occupying the centre of the room, a towel-rack and towel hung on the wall, and a row of wooden drawers built like a bureau, completely filling the end of the room opposite the door. Over this was hung, or rather fitted, the three sides of a huge carved frame, showing traces of having once been gilded, — the space was not high enough to admit its top



member. Inside this frame glowed the noble picture.

I forgot the padre, the oily-tongued sacristan, and even my friend Moon, in my wonder, loosened my trap, opened the stool, and sat down with bated breath to enjoy it.

My first thought was of its marvellous preservation. More than three hundred years have elapsed since the great master touched it, and yet one is deluded into the belief that it was painted but yesterday, so fresh, pure, and rich is its color. This is no doubt due to the climate, and to the clear air circulating through the open window.

The picture is an Entombment, sixteen feet long by seven feet high. Surrounding the dead Christ wrapped in a winding sheet, one end of which is held in the teeth of a disciple, stands the Virgin, Magdalen, Saint John, and nine other figures, all life-size. In the upper left hand corner is a bit of blue sky, against which is relieved an Italian villa, — the painter's own, a caprice of Titian's often seen in his later works.

The high lights fall upon the arm of the Saviour drooping from the hammock-shaped sheet in which he is carried, and upon the head covering of the Virgin bending over him. A secondary light is found in the patch of blue sky. To the right and behind the group of disciples

the shadows are intensely dark, relieving the rich tones of the browns and blues in the draperies, and the flesh tones for which the painter is famous. The exquisite drawing of each figure, the gradation of light and shade, the marvellous composition, the relief and modelling of the Christ, the low but luminous tones in which it is painted, the superb harmony of these tones, all pronounce it the work of a master.

The questions naturally arise, Is it by Titian? and if so, how came it here in an Indian village in the centre of Mexico, and why has it been lost all these years to the art world? To the first I answer, if not by Titian, who then of his time could paint it? The second is easier: until the railroads of the last few years opened up the country, Mexico's isolation was complete.

A slight résumé of the history of its surroundings may shed some light on the question. After the ruin wrought in Michoacan in the early part of the sixteenth century by the evil acts of Niño de Guzman, — the president of the first

Audencia, — terminating in the burning of the Tarascan chief Sinzicha, the people, maddened with terror, fled to the mountains around Tzintzúntzan and refused to return to their homes. To remedy these evils, the Emperor Charles V. selected the members of the second Audencia from among the wisest and best men of Spain. One of these was an intimate friend of the emperor, an eminent lawyer, the Licenciado Vasco de Quiroga. Being come to Mexico, Don Vasco, in the year 1533, visited the depopulated towns, and with admirable patience, gentleness, and love, prevailed on the terror-stricken Indians to have faith in him and return to their homes.[1]

The Bishopric of Michoacan was then founded, and this mitre was offered to Quiroga, though he was then a layman. Thereupon Quiroga took holy orders, and having been raised quickly through the successive grades of the priesthood, was consecrated a bishop and took possession of his see in the church of San Francisco in Tzintzúntzan August 22, 1538. He

[1] Janvier's *Mexican Guide*.

was then sixty-eight years old. As bishop, he completed the conquest through love that he had begun while yet a layman. He established schools of letters and the arts; introduced manufactures of copper and other metals; imported from Spain cattle and seeds for acclimatization; founded hospitals, and established the first university of New Spain, that of San Nicholas, now in Morelia.

When Philip II. ascended the throne the good deeds of the holy bishop had reached his ears, and the power and growth of his see had deeply touched the heart of the devout monarch, awakening in his mind a profound interest in the welfare of the church at Tzintzúntzan and Pátzcuaro. During this period the royal palaces at Madrid were filled with the finest pictures of Titian, and the royal family of Spain formed the subjects of his best portraits. The Emperor Charles V. had been and was then one of the master's most liberal patrons. He had made him a count, heaped upon him distinguished honors, and had been visited by him twice at Augsburg and once at Bologna where he

painted his portrait. It is even claimed by some biographers that by special invitation of his royal patron Titian visited Spain about the year 1550, and was entertained with great splendor at the court. Moreover, it is well known that he was granted a pension, and that this was kept up by Philip until the painter's death.

Remembering the dates at which these events took place; the fanatical zeal of Philip, and his interest in the distant church, redeemed and made glorious by Quiroga, the friend and *protégé* of his royal predecessor; the possible presence of Titian at the court at the time, certainly the influence of his masterpieces, together with the fact that the subject of this picture was a favorite one with him, notably the Entombment in Venice and the *replica* at the Louvre, it is quite within the range of probability that Philip either ordered this especial picture from the master himself, or selected it from the royal collection.

It is quite improbable, in view of the above facts, that the royal donor would

have sent the work of an inferior painter representing it to be by Titian, or a copy by one of his pupils.

Another distinguishing feature, and by far the most conclusive, is its handling. Without strong contrasting tones of color Titian worked out a peculiar golden mellow tone, — which of itself exercises a magical charm, — and divided it into innumerable small but significant shades, producing thereby a most complete illusion of life. This Titianesque quality is particularly marked in the nude body of the Christ, the flesh appearing to glow with a hidden light.

Moon's criticisms were thoroughly characteristic. He hoped I was satisfied. Did I want to see both sides of it; if I did, he would push out the rear wall. Would the spy-glass be of any use, etc. I waved him away, opened my easel, and began a hurried memorandum of the interior, and a rough outline of the position of the figures on the canvas. When his retreating footsteps echoed down the corridor, I closed the doors gently behind him and resumed my work. The picture ab-

sorbed me. I wanted to be shut up alone with it.

A sense of a sort of temporary ownership comes over one when left alone in a room containing some priceless treasure or thing of beauty not his own. It is a selfish pleasure which is undisturbed, and which you do not care to share with another. For the time being you monopolize it, and it is as really your own as if you had the bill of sale in your pocket. I deluded myself with this fancy, and began examining more closely the iron gratings of the window and the manner of fastening them to the masonry, wondering whether they would always be secure. I inspected all the rude ornaments on the front of the drawers of the wide low bureau which stood immediately beneath the picture; opened one of them a few inches and discovered a bundle of vestments dust covered and spattered with candle grease. Lifting myself up I noted the carving of the huge frame, and followed the lines of the old gilding into its dust-begrimed channels; and to make a closer study of the texture of the can-

vas and the handling of the pigments, I mounted the bureau itself and walked the length of the painting, applying my pocket magnifying glass to the varnished surface. When I stood upright the drooping figure of the Christ reached nearly to the level of my eye. Looking closer I found the over-glaze to be rich and singularly transparent, and after a careful scrutiny fancied I could separate into distinct tones the peculiar mosaic of color in which most of all lies the secret of Titian's flesh. In the eagerness of my search I unconsciously bent forward and laid my hand upon the Christ.

"*Cuidado! Estrangero, es muerte!*" (Beware! Stranger, it is death!") came a quick angry voice in my rear.

I started back with my heart in my mouth. Behind me, inside the doors, stood two Indians. One advanced threateningly, the other rushed out shouting for the padre. In an instant the room was crowded with natives clamoring wildly, and pointing at me with angry looks and gestures. The padre arrived breathless, followed by Moon, who had forced his

way through the throng, his big frame towering above the others.

During the hubbub I kept my place on the bureau, undecided what to do.

"You have put your foot in it!" said Moon, to me, in English in a tone of voice new to me from him. "Do exactly what I tell you, and perhaps we may get away from here with a whole skin. Turn your face to the picture." I did so. "Now come down from that old clothes-press backwards, get down on your knees, and bow three times, you lunatic."

I had sense enough left to do this reverently, and with some show of ceremony.

Then without moving a muscle of his face, and with the deepest earnestness, Moon turned to the padre and said: —

"The distinguished painter is a true believer, holy father. His hand had lost its cunning and he could no longer paint. He was told in a dream to journey to this place, where he would find this sacred treasure, upon touching which his hand would regain its power. See! Here is the proof."

The padre examined the sketch resting upon my easel, and without taking his eye from Moon, repeated the miracle to the Indians in their own tongue. The change in their demeanor was instantaneous. The noise ceased ; a silence fell upon the group and they crowded about the drawing wonderstruck. Moon bowed low to the padre, caught up the standing easel, threw my trap over his shoulder, pushed me ahead of him, an opening was made, — the people standing back humbly, — and we passed through the crowd and out into the sunlight.

Once clear of the church he led the way straight to the catamaran, hoisted the sail, manned the sweeps, swung the rudder clear of the shoal, and headed for Pátzcuaro. When everything was snug and trim for the voyage home, and the catamaran had drifted slowly out into the deep water of the lake, the commodore lounged down the deck, laid his hand upon my shoulder, and said, half reprovingly, —

" Well, you beat the devil."

When we pushed off from Tzintzúntzan, the afternoon sun was glorifying our end of the universe, and in our delirium we fancied we had but to spread our one wing to reach bed and board, fifteen miles distant, before the rosy twilight could fade into velvet blue. But the wind was contrary. It was worse — it was malicious. It blew south, then north, and then took a flying turn all around the four points of the compass, and finally settled down to a steady freshness dead ahead. For hours at a time low points of land and high hills guarded by sentinel trees anchored themselves off our weather bow as if loath to part from us, and remained immovable until an extra spurt at the sweeps drove them into the darkness. To return was hazardous, to drift ashore dangerous, to advance almost impossible. As the night wore on the wind grew tired of frolicking and went careering over the mountains behind us. Then the lake grew still, and the sweeps gained upon the landscape and point after point floated off mysteriously and disappeared in the gloom.

All night we lay on the deck looking up at the stars and listening to the steady plashing of the sweeps, pitying the poor fellows at their task and lending a hand now and then to give them a breathing spell. The thin crescent of the new moon, which had glowed into life as the color left the evening sky, looked at us wonderingly for a while, then concluding that we intended making a night of it, dropped down behind the hills of Xanicho and went to bed. Her namesake wrapped his own coat about me, protesting that the night air was bad for foreigners, threw one end of the ragged tarpaulin over his own shoulders, tucked a hamper under his head, and spent the night moralizing over the deliberate cruelty of my desertion in the morning.

It was a long and dreary voyage. The provender was exhausted. There was not on board a crumb large enough to feed a fly. Between the padre, the six Indians, and ourselves every fig, dulce, bone, crust, and drop had disappeared.

When the first streak of light illumined the sky we found ourselves near enough

to Pátzcuaro to follow the outline of the hills around the town and locate the little huts close to the shore. When the dawn broke clear we were pushing aside the tall grass near the beach, and the wild fowl, startled from their haunts, were whirling around our heads.

The barking of a dog aroused the inmates of a cabin near the water's edge, and half an hour later Moon was pounding coffee in a bag and I devilling the legs of a turkey over a charcoal brazier — the inmates had devoured all but the drumsticks the night before. We were grateful that he was not a cripple. While the savory smell of the toasted *cacone*, mingled with the aroma of boiling coffee, filled the room, Moon set two plates, cut some great slices of bread from a loaf which he held between his knees, and divided equally the remnants of the frugal meal. Two anatomical specimens picked clean and white and two empty plates told the story of our appetites.

"At eight o'clock, *caro mio*, the train returns to the East. Do you still insist on being barbarous enough to leave

me? What have I done to you that you should treat me thus?"

I pleaded my necessities. I had reached the end of my journey. My task was completed; henceforth my face must be set towards the rising sun. Would he return as far with me as Zacatécas, or even to the city of Mexico?

No, he expected a dispatch from his chief. He would stay at Pátzcuaro.

I expected this. It was always his chief. No human being had ever seen him; no messenger had ever brought news of his arrival; no employee had ever explained his delay. In none of the cities through which we had travelled had Moon ever spent five minutes in looking him up, or ten seconds in regretting his absence.

When my traps were aboard, and the breezy, happy-hearted fellow had wrung my hand for the twentieth time, I said to him: —

"Moon, one thing before we part. Have you ever seen your chief for a single instant since we left Toluca?"

He looked at me quizzically, closed his

left eye, — a habit with him when anything pleased him greatly, — and replied : —

"A dozen times."

"Where?" I asked doubtingly.

"When I shave."

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